

MARVEL

522

WAID
WIERINGO
KESEL

THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!

Fantastic Four

RISING
STORM
PART 3 of 4



R!K!
'04
MOUNTS

THE FANTASTIC FOUR

4

A team—and a family—of adventurers, explorers and imagonauts, the Fantastic Four lead lives both ordinary—and extraordinary. As of today:

3

A growing number of planets have been using an "intergalactic shareware" technology to cloak themselves from the world-eating cosmic menace known as Galactus, rendering themselves invisible to even his most advanced instruments of detection.

2

Hungering for these planets, Galactus chose as his new, reluctant Herald the one person in this vast universe with the natural ability to nullify cloaking shields of all kinds: Johnny Storm, the former Human Torch, whose powers have been swapped with those of his sister, Sue Storm Richards.

1

Johnny, however—imbued with the Power Cosmic—has had those powers amplified to the point where nothing is hidden from him...including the secret of Galactus's origins, which Johnny now recounts...



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RISING STORM

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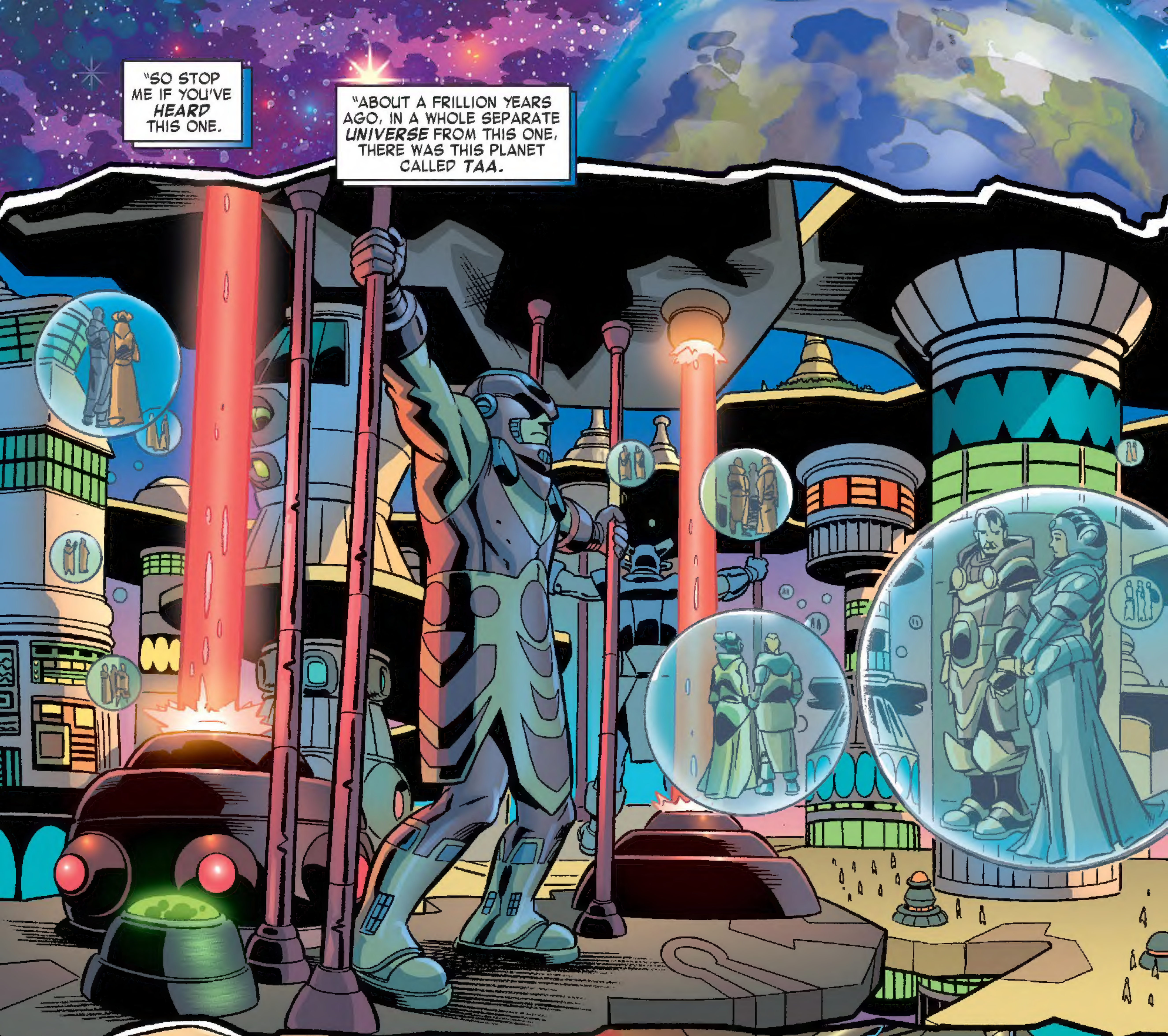
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the perfect storm

**PART
3 of 4**

"SO STOP
ME IF YOU'VE
HEARD
THIS ONE.

"ABOUT A FRILLION YEARS
AGO, IN A WHOLE SEPARATE
UNIVERSE FROM THIS ONE,
THERE WAS THIS PLANET
CALLED TAA.



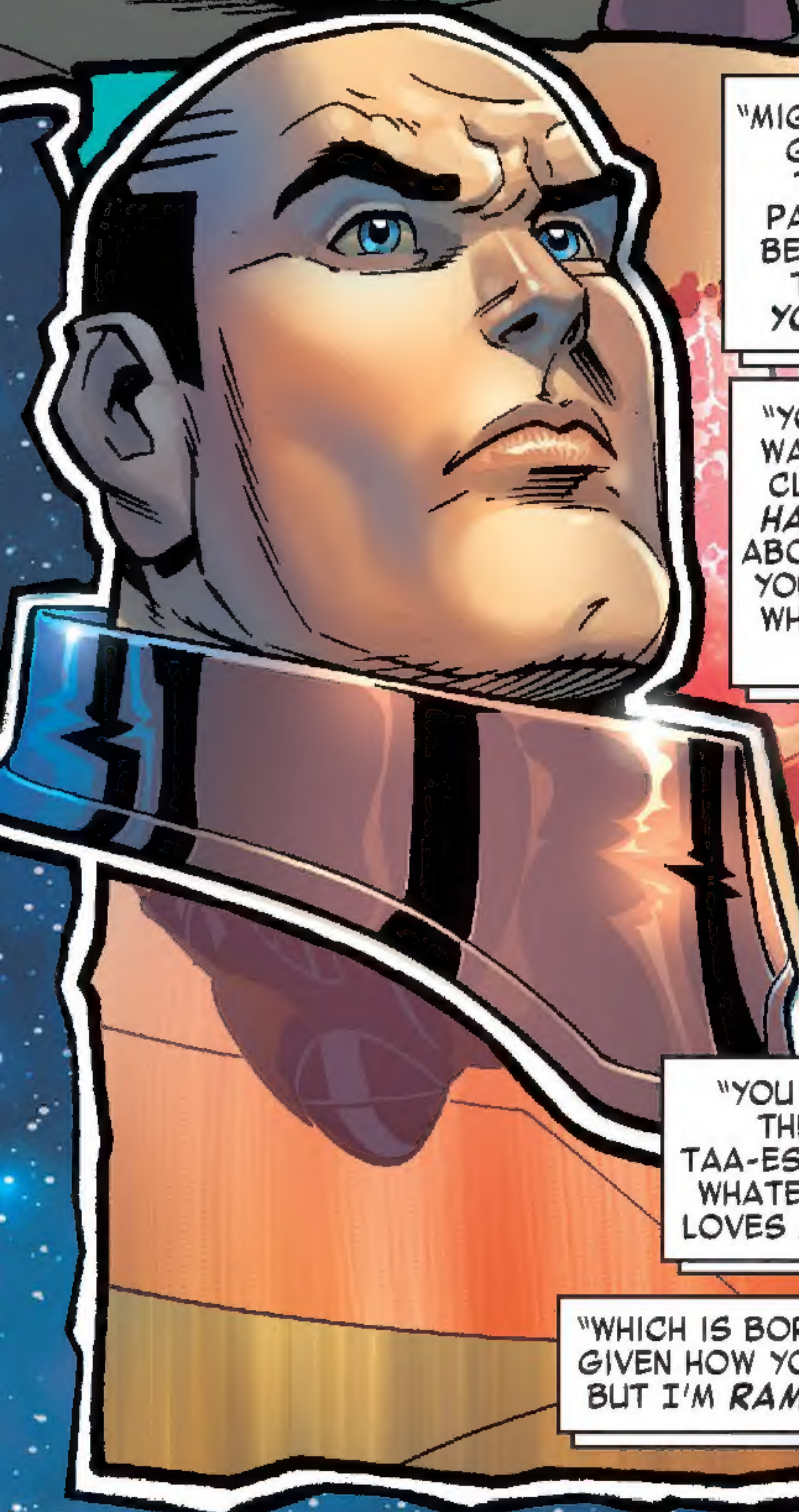
"MIGHTY EXPLORERS,
GREAT MINDS,
TRANQUILITY,
PARADISE, ETC.
BEAUTIFUL PLACE.
THIS IS WHERE
YOU WERE BORN.


"YOUR NAME BACK THEN
WAS *GALEN*. YOU WERE
CLEARLY DUMB ABOUT
HAIRCUTS, BUT SMART
ABOUT EVERYTHING *ELSE*.
YOU WERE THE ONLY ONE
WHO SAW THE *SAND* IN
THE HOURGLASS.

"WHILE EVERYONE
ELSE ASSUMED
TIME WAS *INFINITE*,
YOU DETECTED
THE *RADIOACTIVE*
PLAGUE THAT WAS
SWALLOWING ALL
EXISTENCE.

"YOU TRIED *WARNING*
THE TAA...IANS...
TAA-ESE...TAA-RONIANS...
WHATEVER...BUT NO ONE
LOVES A *HERALD*, RIGHT?

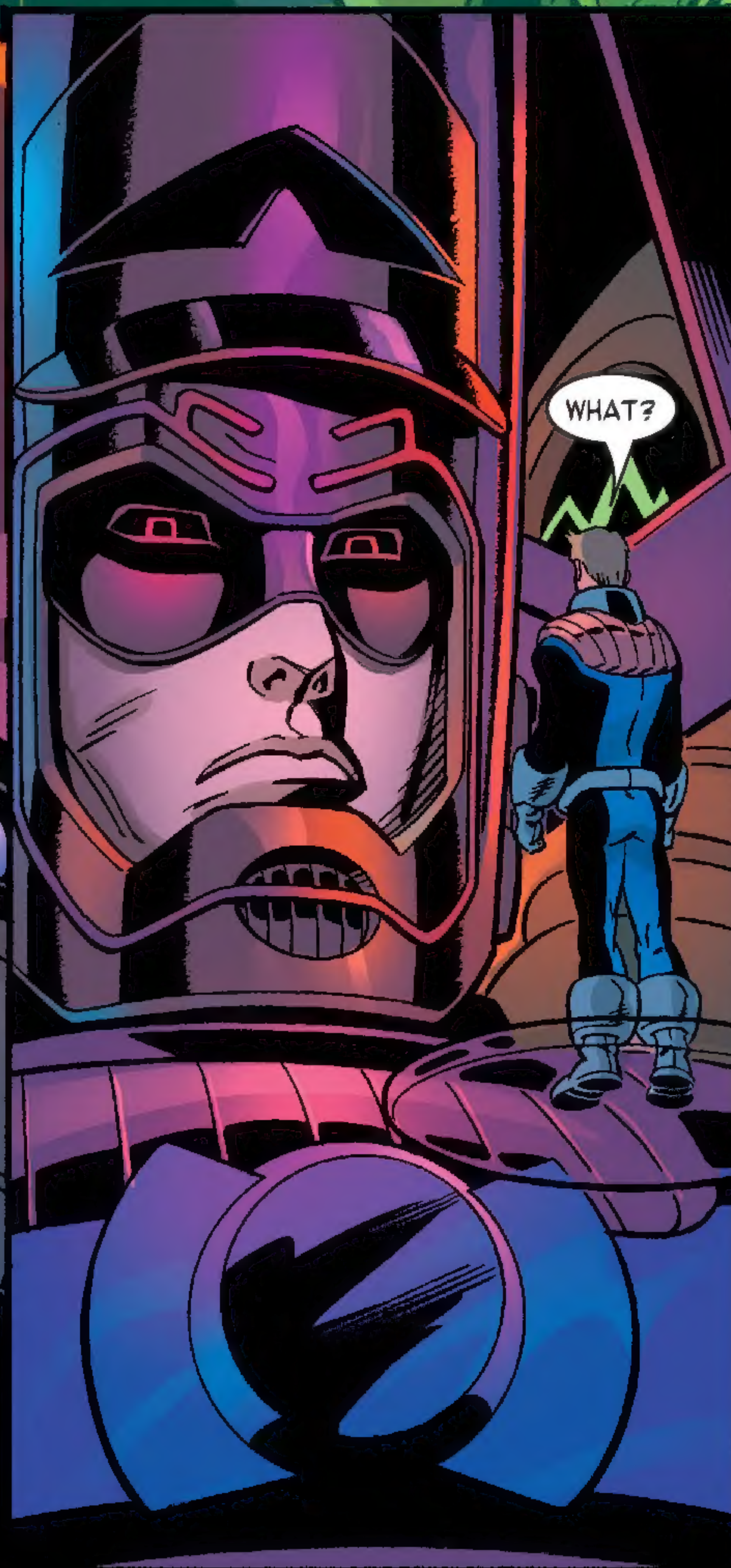
"WHICH IS BORDERLINE *IRONIC*,
GIVEN HOW YOU OPERATE NOW,
BUT I'M *RAMBLING*. ANYWAY...





"TO YOUR SERIOUS CREDIT, YOU WENT *INVESTIGATING* WHILE EVERYONE ELSE GAVE UP AND STARTED PICKING OUT *TOMBSTONES*. YOU SET OUT IN A *STARSHIP* WITH THREE *OTHERS*...

"...BUT YOUR SHIP'S *SHIELDING* WASN'T *STRONG* ENOUGH! YOU AND YOUR CREW WERE *RAC-TAC-TAC-TAC-TAC* STRAFED WITH *INTERSTELLAR RADIATION--COSMIC RAYS* THAT CHANGED YOU--*FANTASTICALLY!*"



WHAT?

OH. WAIT. I'M SORRY, THAT'S OUR ORIGIN. BUT IT'S ALSO YOUR...

...I MEAN... IT HAPPENED TO YOU THAT WAY, TOO, PRETTY MUCH, WHAT WITH THE *SHIP* AND THE *RAYS* AND THE *TRANSFORMING*, AND IT'S AN INTERESTING *COINCIDENCE*, DON'TCHA...MAYBE I SHOULD JUST MOVE ON HERE...

"SO THE CREW'S WIPE
OUT, AND YOU'RE ALL
THAT'S LEFT, AND WITH
YOUR LAST BREATH, YOU
HEARD A VOICE WHICH
SAID, AND I QUOTE:

"HEAR ME,
LAST SON OF TAA--I
AM THE SENTIENCE OF THE
UNIVERSE! LIKE YOURSELF, I AM
DYING! IN MERE MOMENTS AS I
MARK TIME, I SHALL DRAW ALL
THE MATTER IN THE COSMOS
INTO MY BOSOM AND COLLAPSE
BENEATH MY OWN ABYSMAL
WEIGHT!

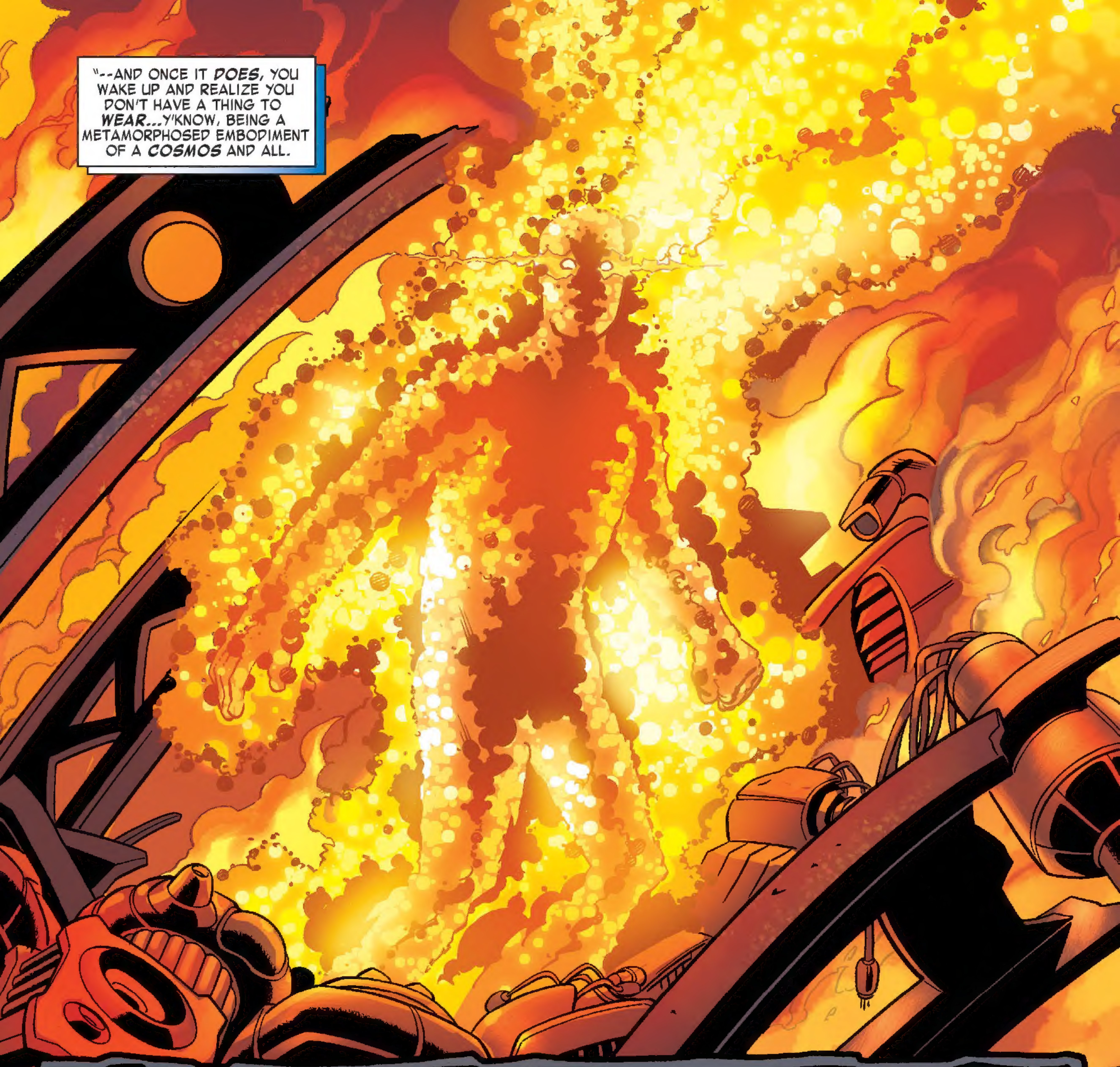
"BUT
THOUGH WE BOTH MUST
DIE, WE NEED NOT DIE WITHOUT
AN HEIR! COME, SURRENDER
YOURSELF TO MY FIERY EMBRACE,
AND LET US BECOME AS
ONE! LET OUR DEATH THROES
SERVE AS THE BIRTH PANGS
FOR A NEW FORM
OF LIFE!"

"VA-BOOM. BIG COLLAPSE,
FOLLOWED BY A BIG BANG.
WITH ITS DYING BURP, YOUR
UNIVERSE TELLS YOU THAT
YOU HAVE A DESTINY...
SOME PURPOSE IN THE
GRAND ÜBERDESIGN..."

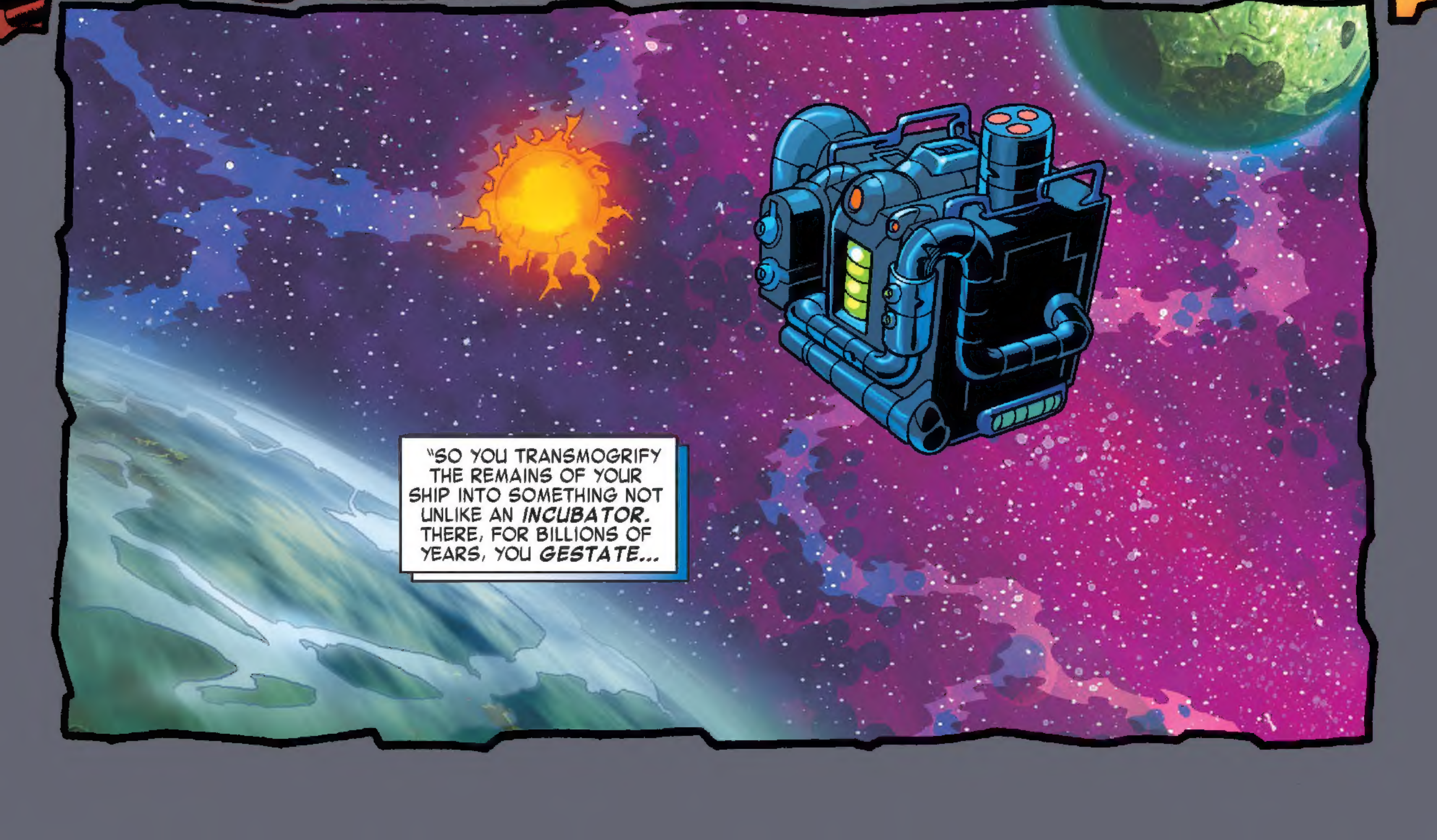
"...THEN SPITS YOU AND
YOUR STARSHIP INTO
THE COSMIC SOUP THAT
WILL EVENTUALLY COOL
ITSELF TO FORM THIS
UNIVERSE.

"DUDE, YOU
ARE OLD.

"FOR EONS, YOUR
CRAFT ROCKETS
AROUND, LOOKING FOR
A PLACE TO LAND--



"--AND ONCE IT *DOES*, YOU WAKE UP AND REALIZE YOU DON'T HAVE A THING TO *WEAR*...Y'KNOW, BEING A METAMORPHOSED EMBODIMENT OF A *COSMOS* AND ALL.



"SO YOU TRANSMOGRIFY THE REMAINS OF YOUR SHIP INTO SOMETHING NOT UNLIKE AN *INCUBATOR*. THERE, FOR BILLIONS OF YEARS, YOU *GESTATE*...

"...EVENTUALLY EMERGING AS
*GALACTUS...THE DEVOURER
OF WORLDS!* THE TYRANNY
THAT STRIDES THE *STARS*,
SHAPED ONLY BY THE ALL-
CONSUMING *HUNGER* THAT
TRANSCENDS OUR PETTY
CONCEPTS OF 'GOOD' AND
'EVIL'! HE WHO SIMPLY...*IS!*"



"ANNNNND...
SCENE."



I GOTTA SAY, KNOWING THIS... IT REALLY CASTS YOU IN A WHOLE NEW LIGHT, IF YOU DON'T MIND MY SAYING SO.

HONESTLY? I THINK THE THORN IN YOUR PAW IS THAT, AFTER, WHAT?, FIVE BILLION YEARS OF BEING COSMIC, YOU'VE COMPLETELY FORGOTTEN WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE HUMAN.



BUT, DEEP DOWN, YOU...AND I MEAN, SO VERY DEEP DOWN...YOU ARE. IN FACT, IF I MAY BE SO BOLD, YOU AND I ARE ACTUALLY A LOT ALIKE. THINK ABOUT IT.

WE'RE BOTH MOTIVATED EACH AND EVERY DAY BY THE SAME BURNING QUESTION: "WHAT'S FOR DINNER?"

WE BOTH LIVE IN THE MOMENT. SO NOT TO GO ALL DR. PHIL ON YOU, BUT HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED GETTING SOME PERSPEC--



YOU HAVE PRATTLED LONG ENOUGH, HERALD.

AAAGGHH!!

YOU HAVE SERVED YOUR PURPOSE BY UNVEILING THE WORLDS FROM WHICH GALACTUS WILL NOW FEED.



SUE'S GHAAAH RIGHT... I NEVER KNOW WHEN TO AAAAH SHUT UP...

STALLED HIM AS LONG...AS I COULD...

...NICE PLAN...WHILE IT LASTED...

...REED, WHERE ARE YOU...?



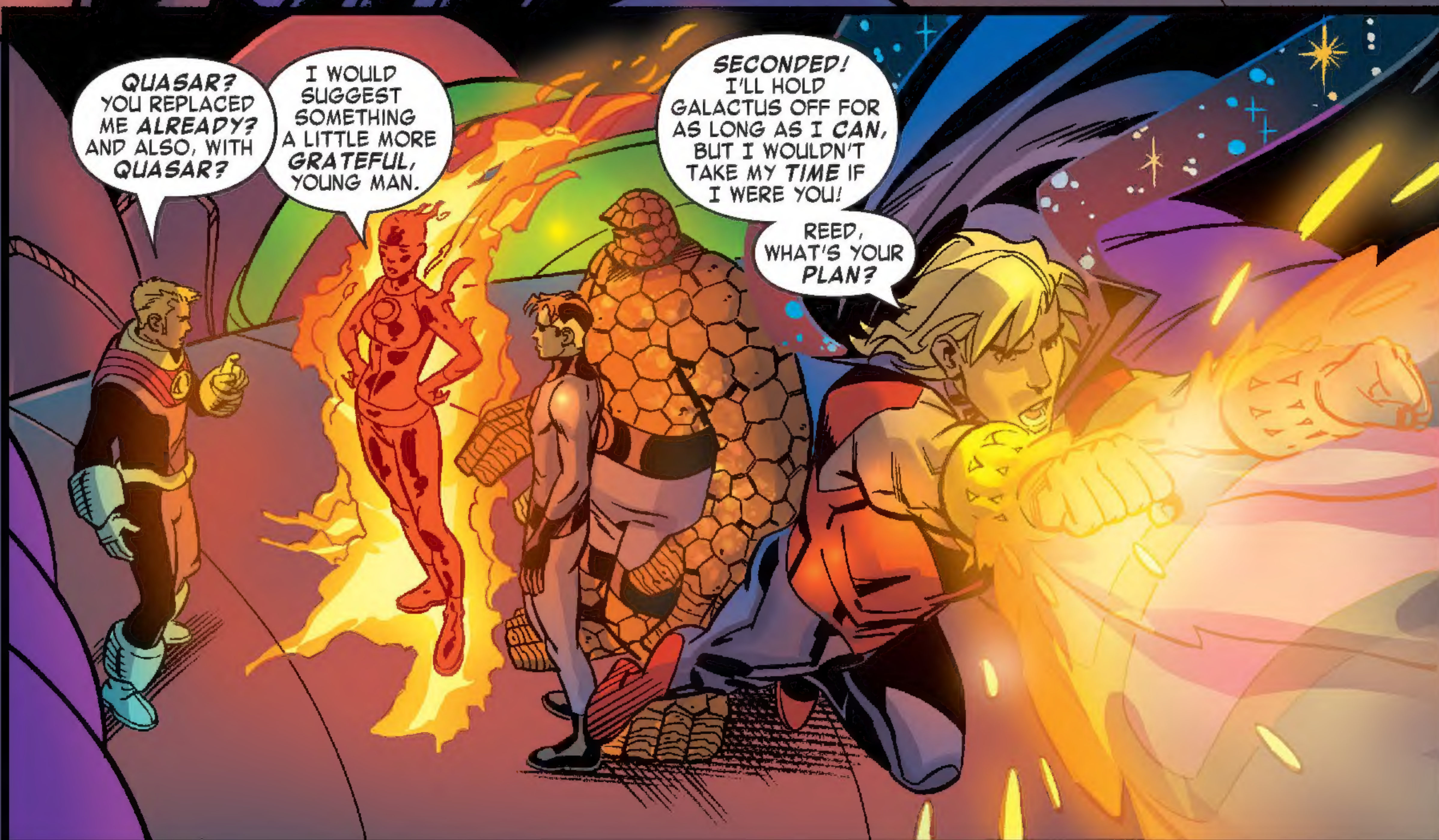
I'VE GOT YOU, SON!

QUASAR, SHIELD HIM!



'SRIGHT, BICHEAD! TH' CAVALRY'S HERE!

JOHNNY, WE WERE SO WORRIED! ARE YOU OKAY? SAY SOMETHING!



QUASAR? YOU REPLACED ME ALREADY? AND ALSO, WITH QUASAR?

I WOULD SUGGEST SOMETHING A LITTLE MORE GRATEFUL, YOUNG MAN.

SECONDED! I'LL HOLD GALACTUS OFF FOR AS LONG AS I CAN, BUT I WOULDN'T TAKE MY TIME IF I WERE YOU!

REED, WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?

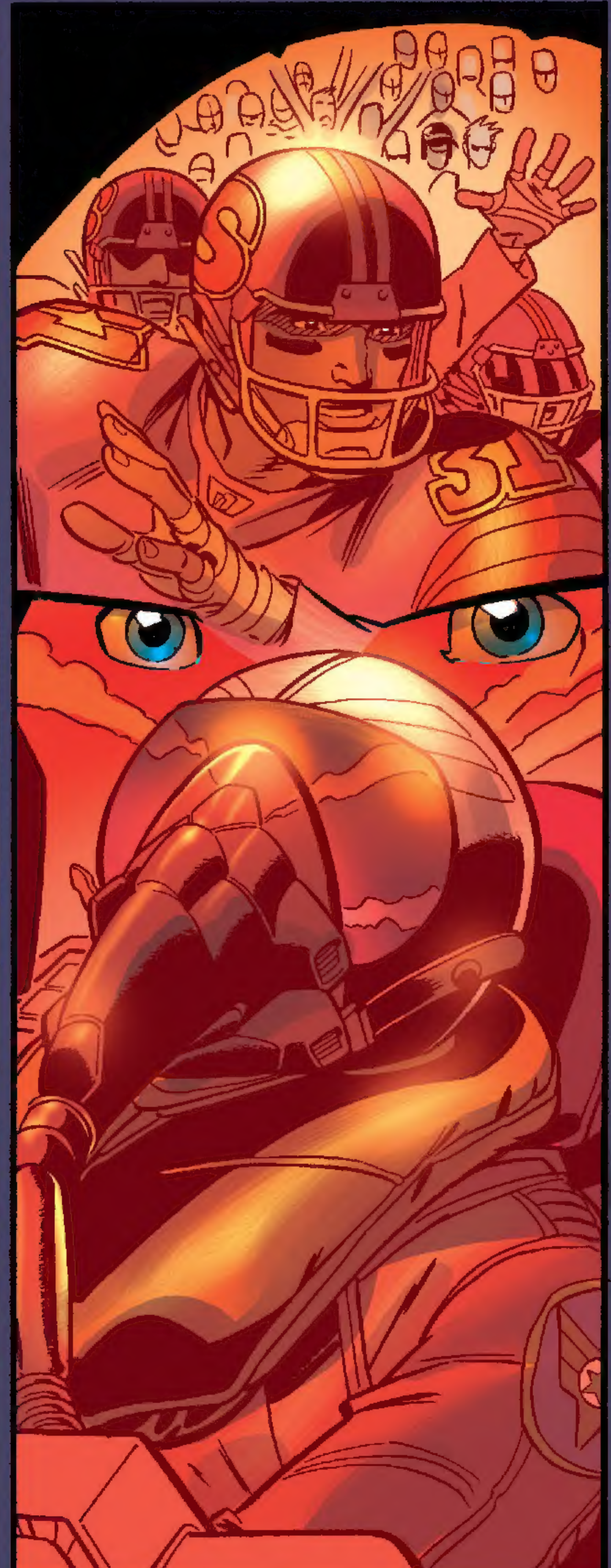
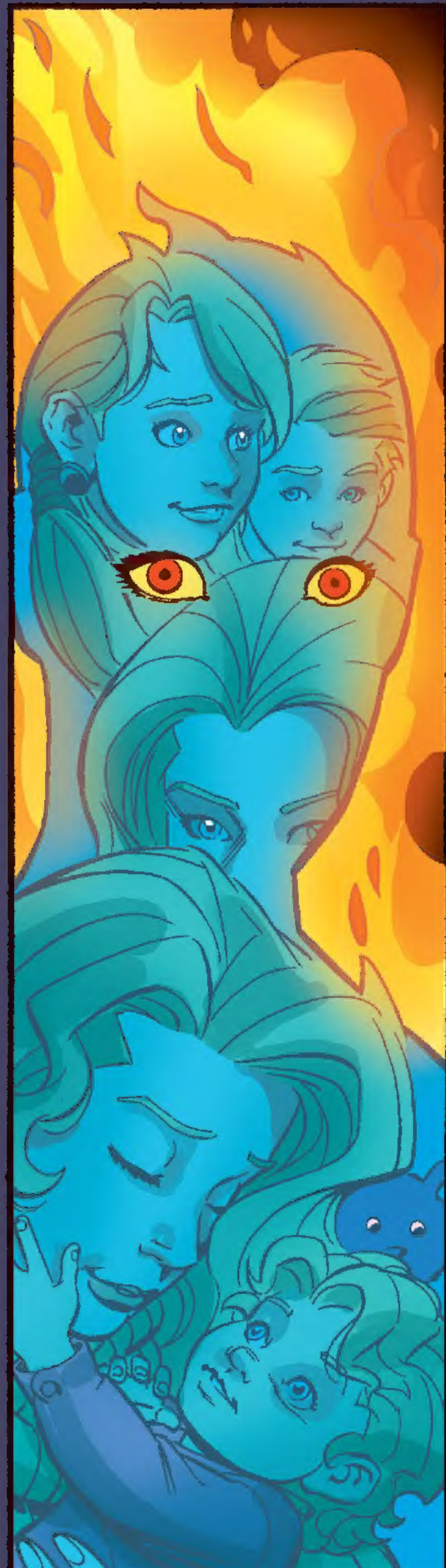
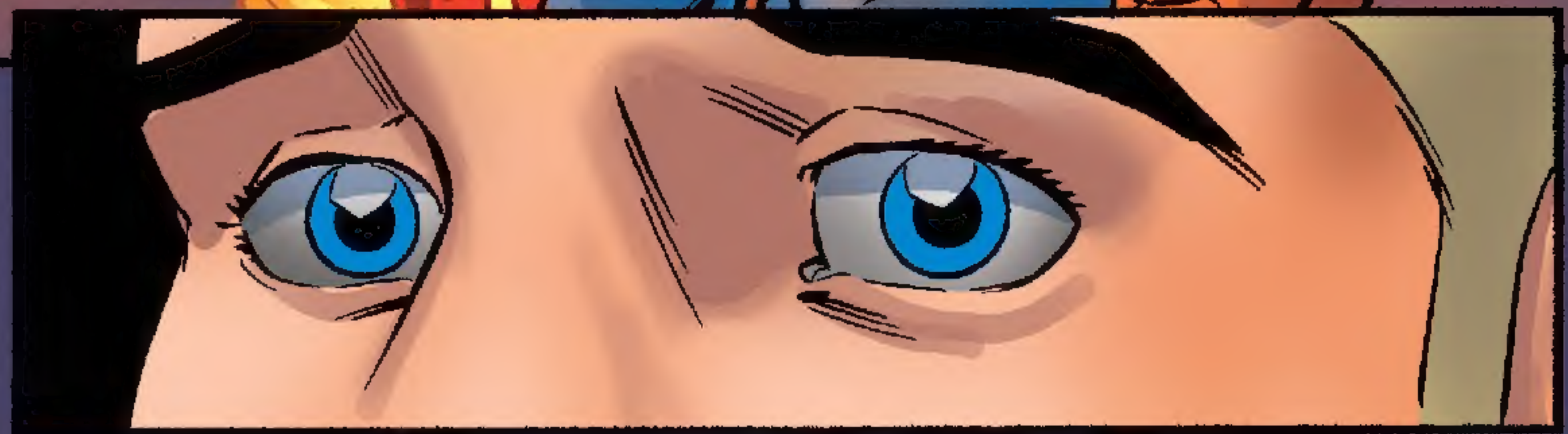


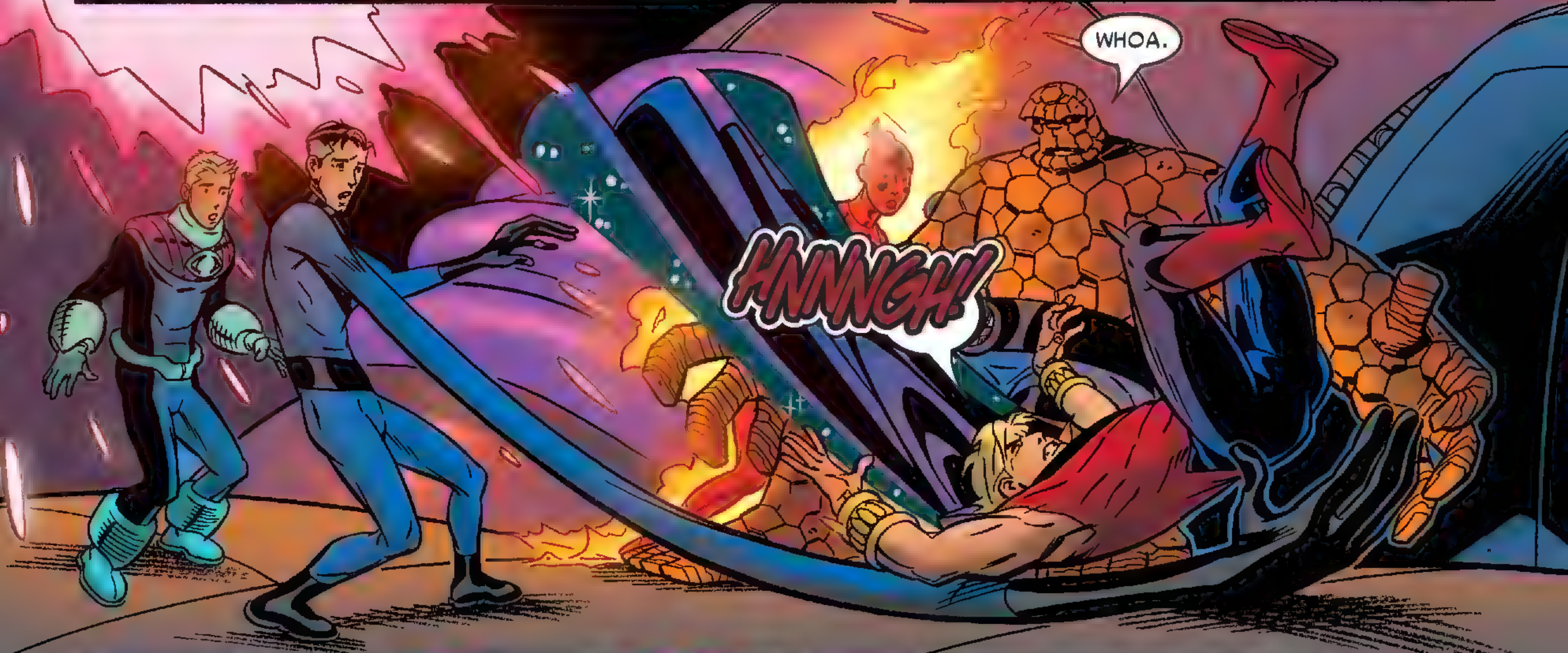
I'M STILL NOT ENTIRELY **CERTAIN**, THOUGH NOW THAT I HAVE A MORE IMMEDIATE GRASP OF THE **VARIABLES**, I HAVE SOME **CONJECTURES** AND--

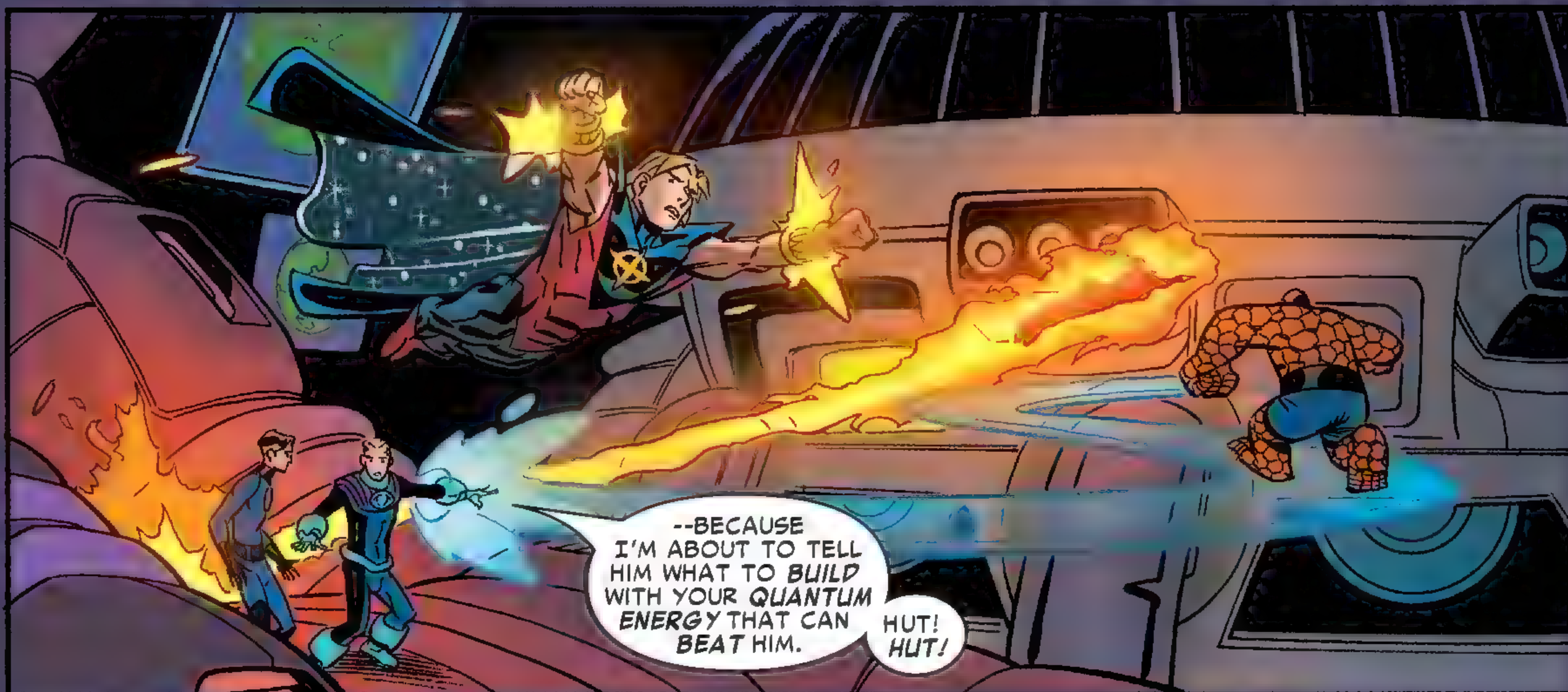
--JOHNNY, WHAT'S WRONG?



JOHNNY?

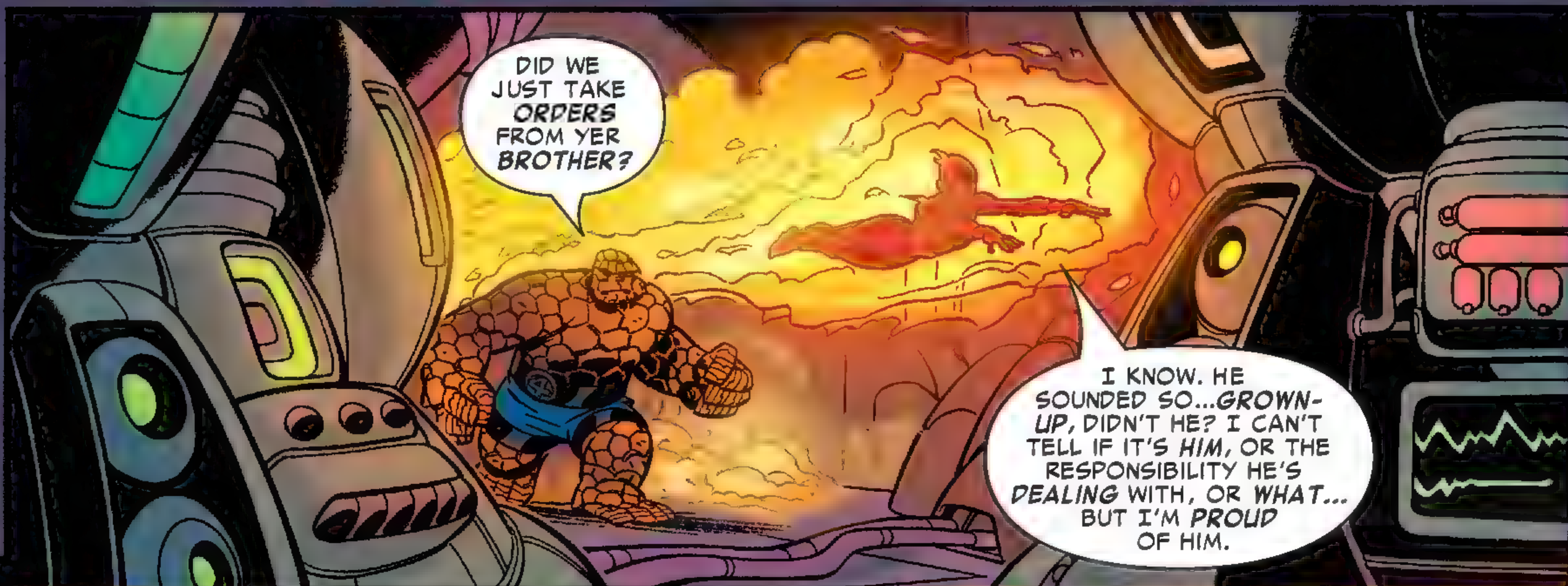






--BECAUSE
I'M ABOUT TO TELL
HIM WHAT TO BUILD
WITH YOUR QUANTUM
ENERGY THAT CAN
BEAT HIM.

HUT!
HUT!



DID WE
JUST TAKE
ORDERS
FROM YER
BROTHER?

I KNOW. HE
SOUNDED SO...GROWN-
UP, DIDN'T HE? I CAN'T
TELL IF IT'S HIM, OR THE
RESPONSIBILITY HE'S
DEALING WITH, OR WHAT...
BUT I'M PROUD
OF HIM.

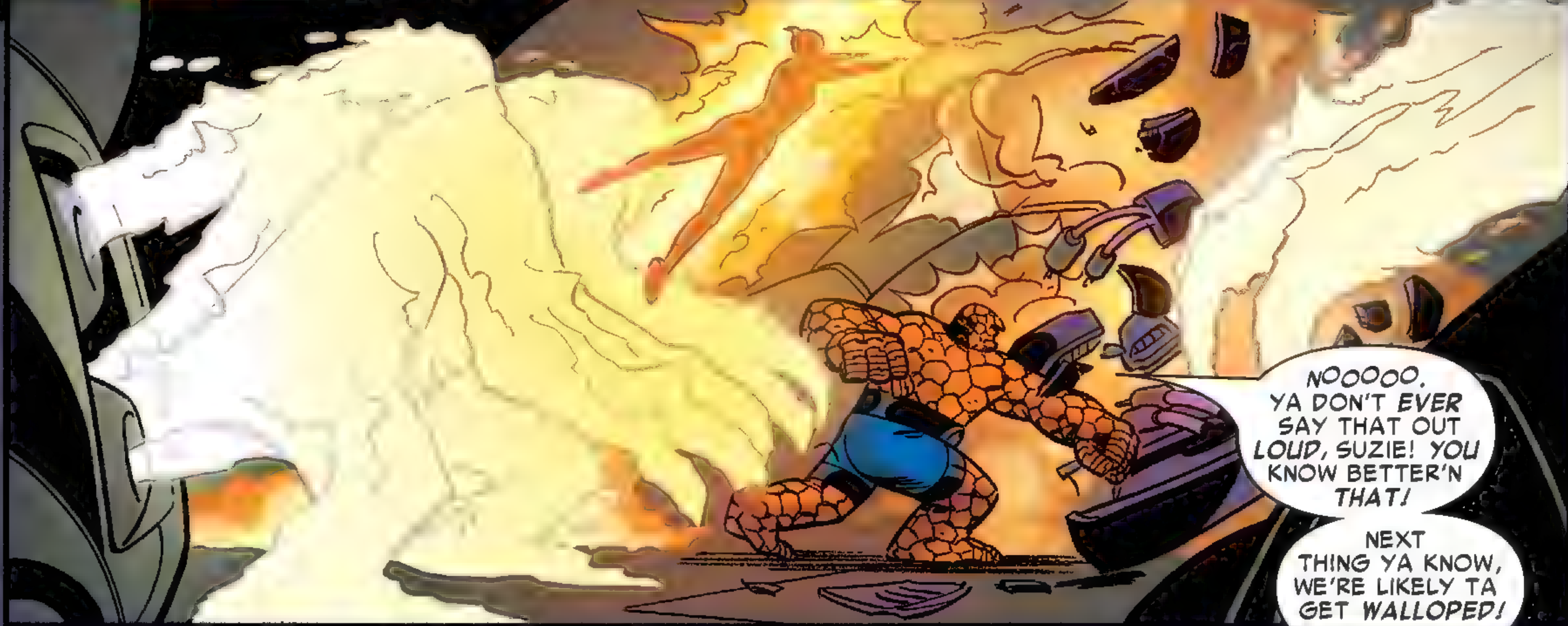


ENUFF WITH
TH' SENTIMENTAL
TALK, AWRIGHT?
YOU DON'T WANT
ME T'START
BAWLIN'.

WE CAN DO A LOT
OF DAMAGE IN HERE.
THIS IS--

NUP-
UP-UP-UP-
UP--!

--EASY...?



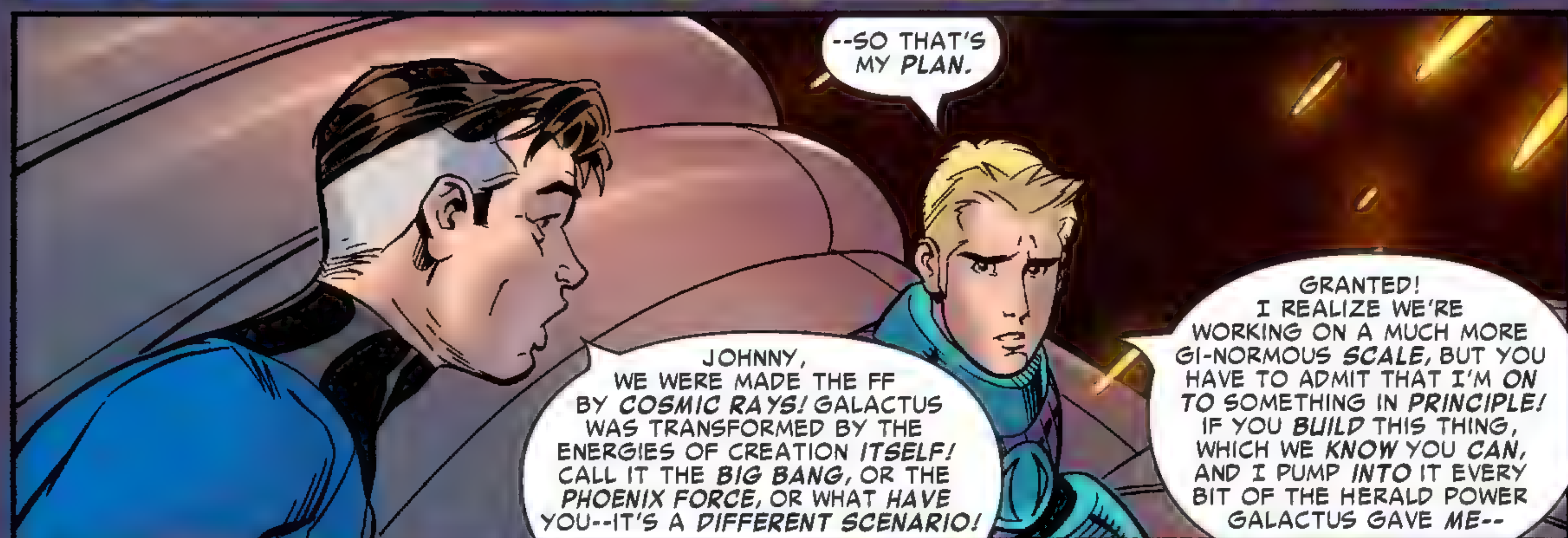
NOOOOO.
YA DON'T EVER
SAY THAT OUT
LOUD, SUZIE! YOU
KNOW BETTER'N
THAT!

NEXT
THING YA KNOW,
WE'RE LIKELY TA
GET WALLOPED!



YOU EXASPERATE ME, EARTHSON.

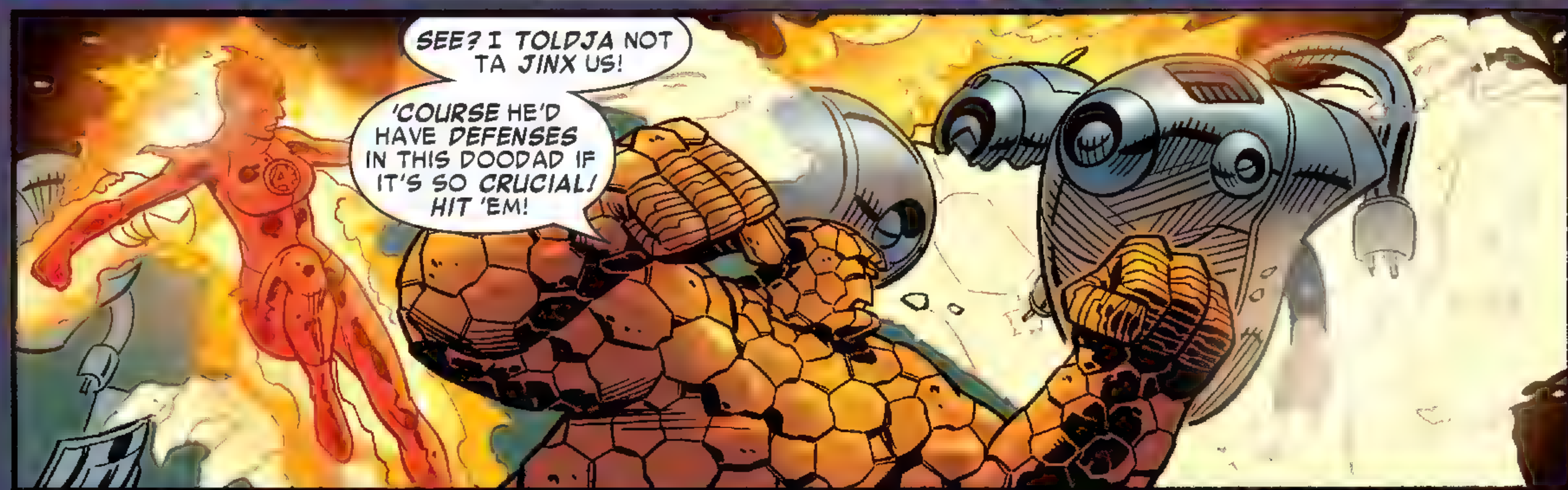
IT'S A LIVING.



--SO THAT'S MY PLAN.

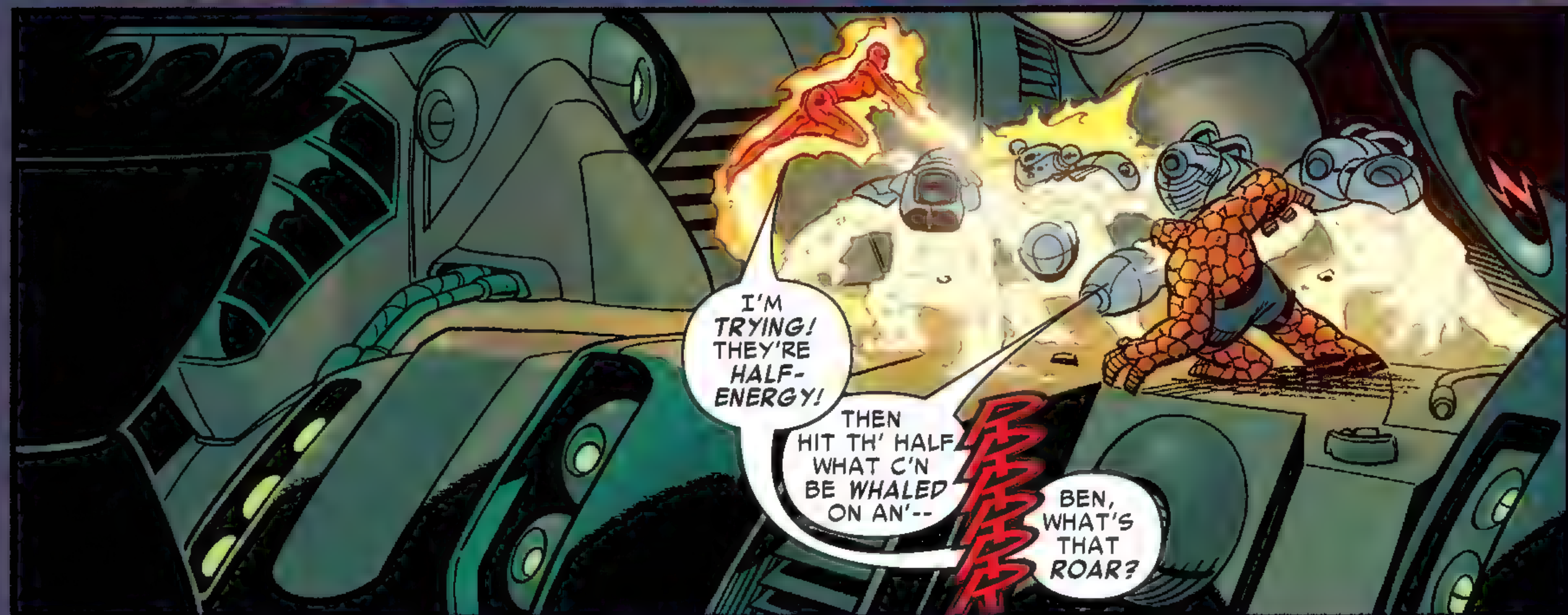
JOHNNY, WE WERE MADE THE FF BY COSMIC RAYS! GALACTUS WAS TRANSFORMED BY THE ENERGIES OF CREATION ITSELF! CALL IT THE BIG BANG, OR THE PHOENIX FORCE, OR WHAT HAVE YOU--IT'S A DIFFERENT SCENARIO!

GRANTED! I REALIZE WE'RE WORKING ON A MUCH MORE GI-NORMOUS SCALE, BUT YOU HAVE TO ADMIT THAT I'M ON TO SOMETHING IN PRINCIPLE! IF YOU BUILD THIS THING, WHICH WE KNOW YOU CAN, AND I PUMP INTO IT EVERY BIT OF THE HERALD POWER GALACTUS GAVE ME--



SEE? I TOLDJA NOT TA JINX US!

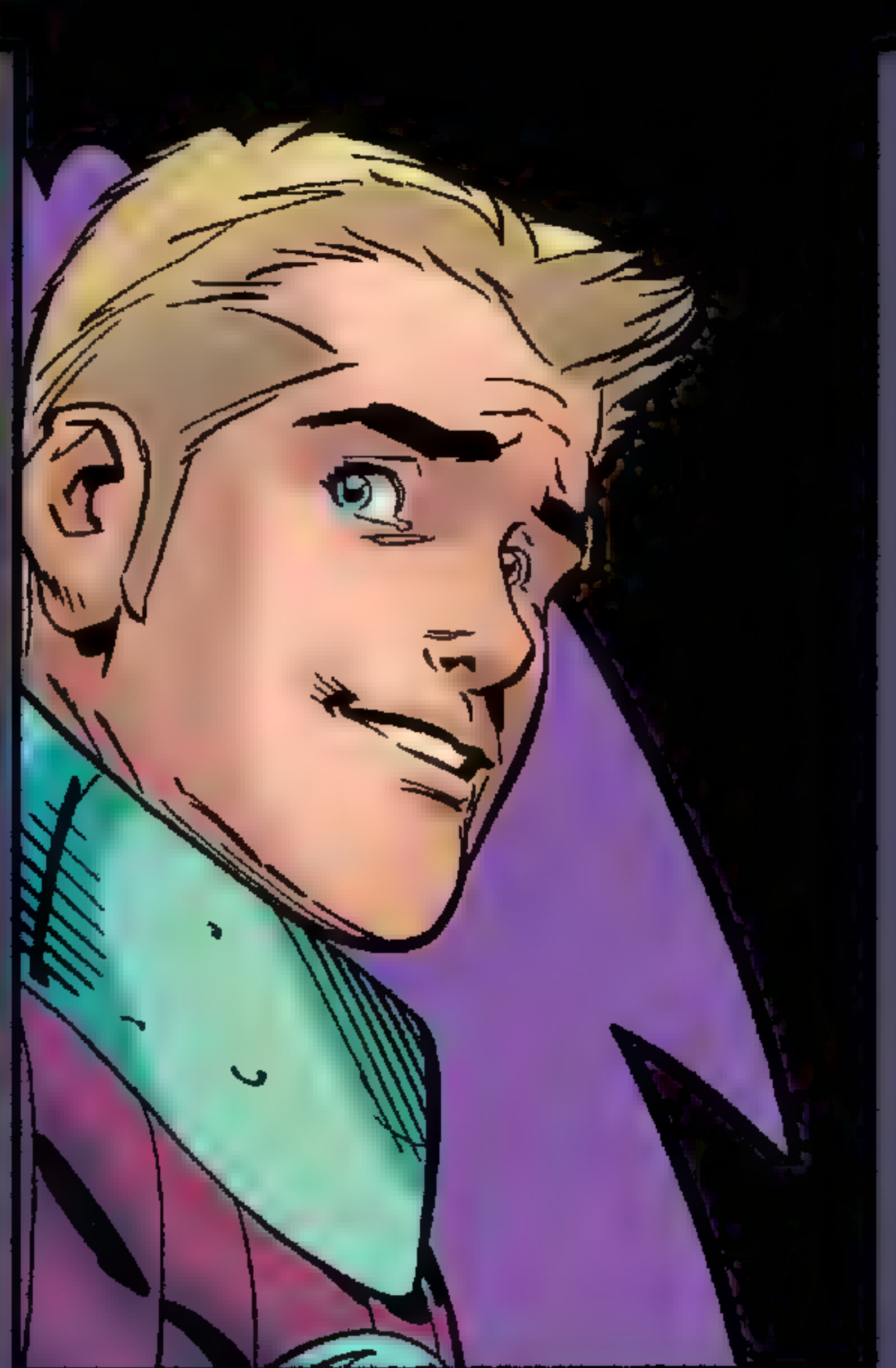
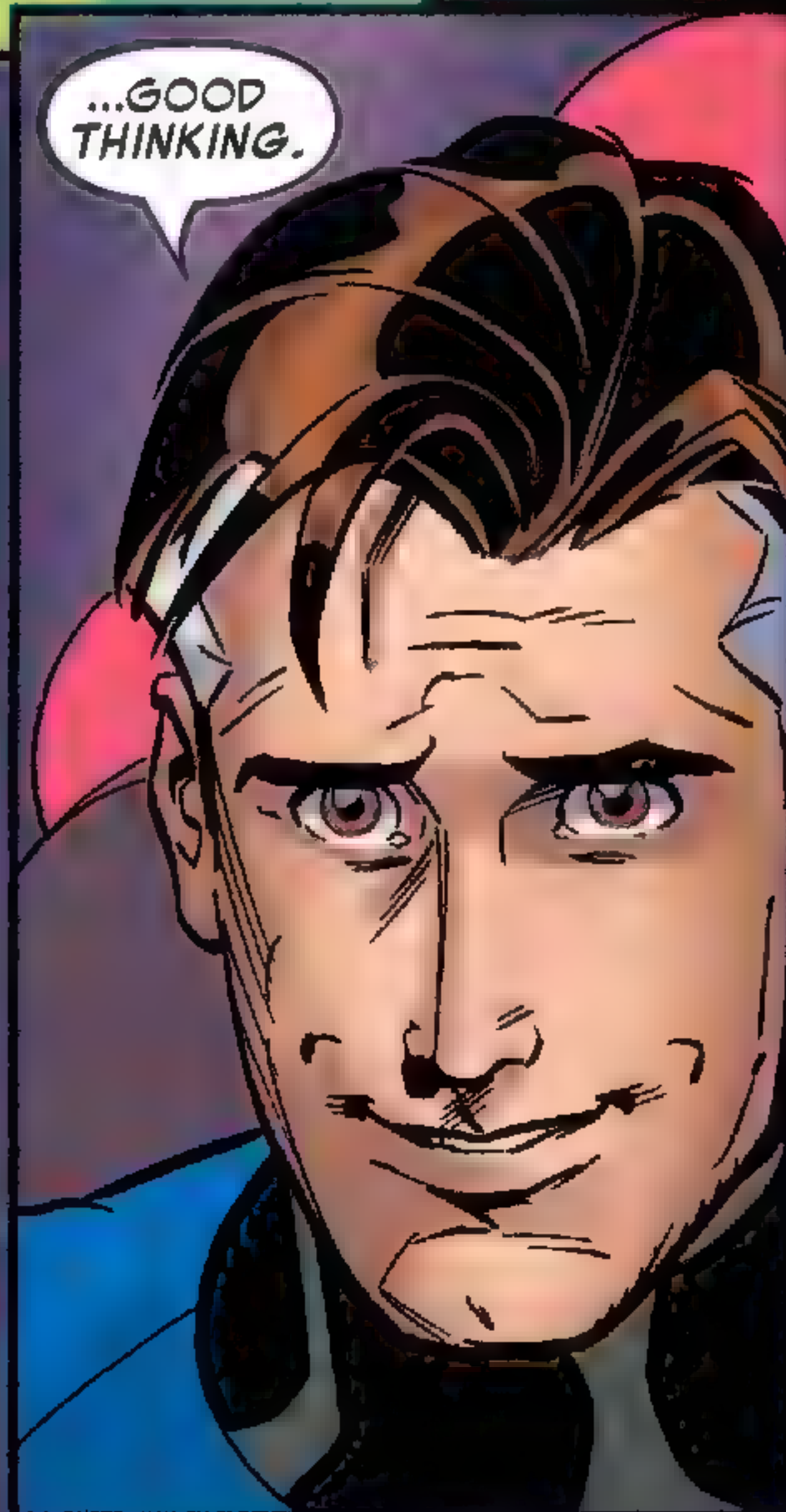
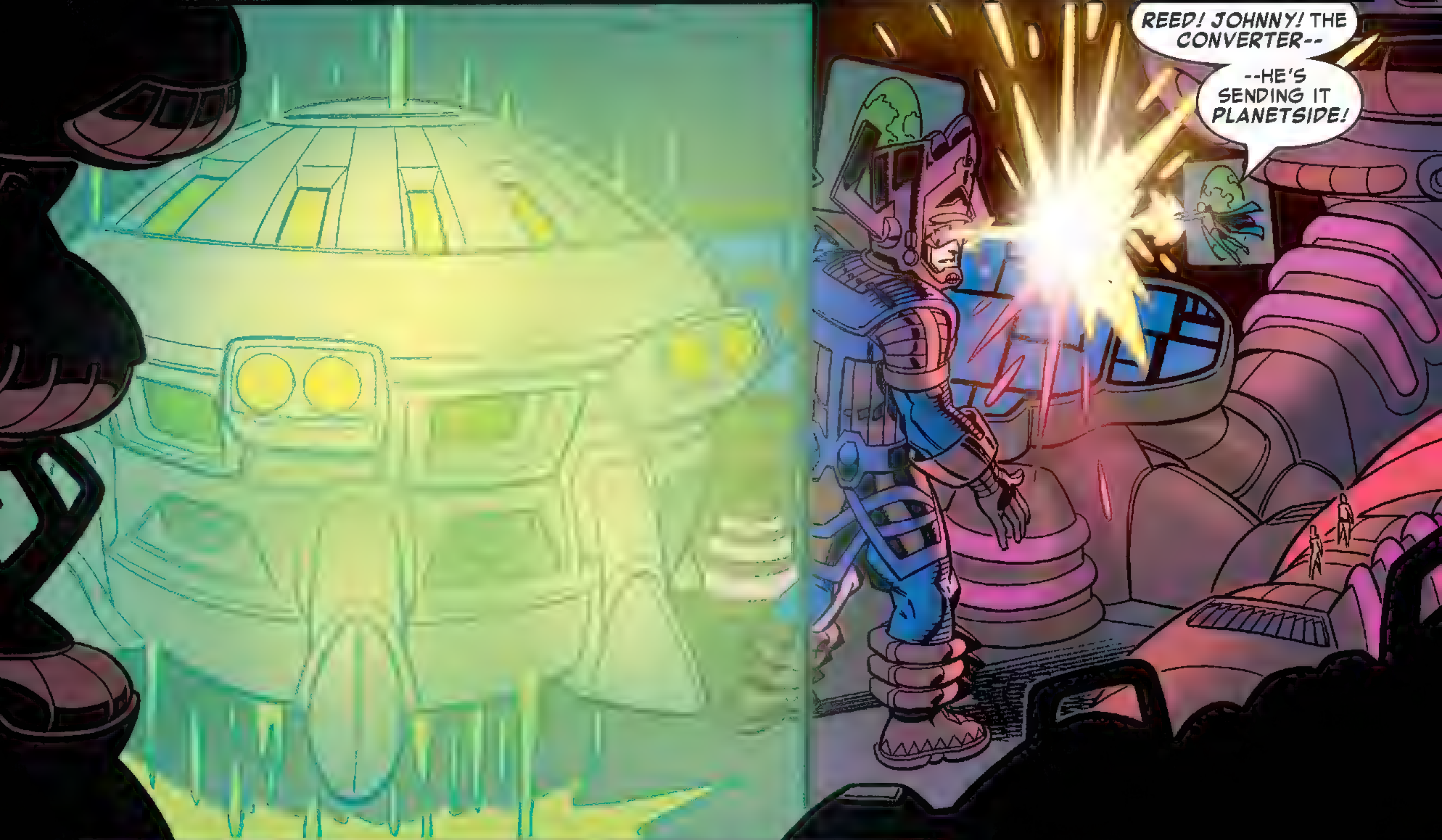
'COURSE HE'D HAVE DEFENSES IN THIS DOODAD IF IT'S SO CRUCIAL! HIT 'EM!

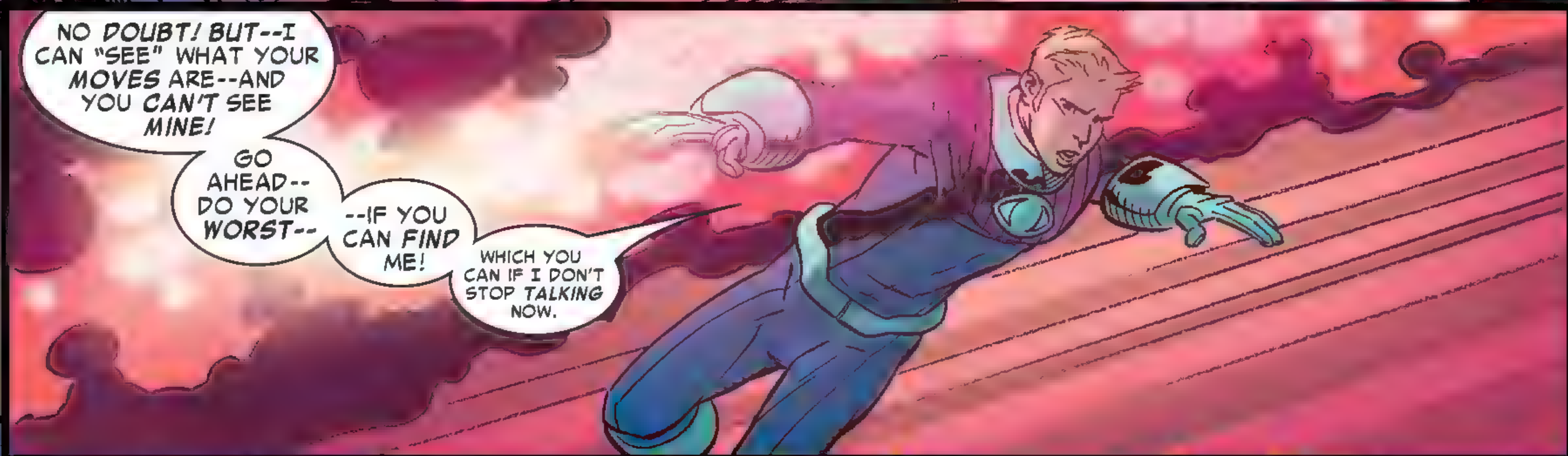
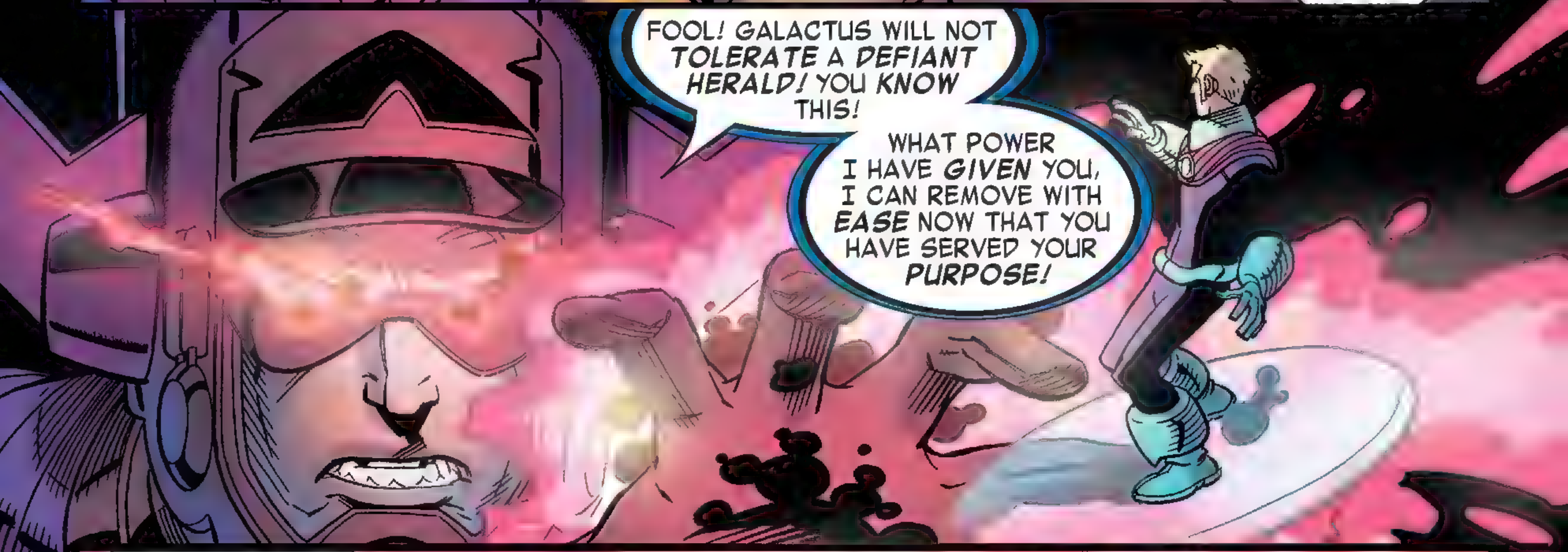


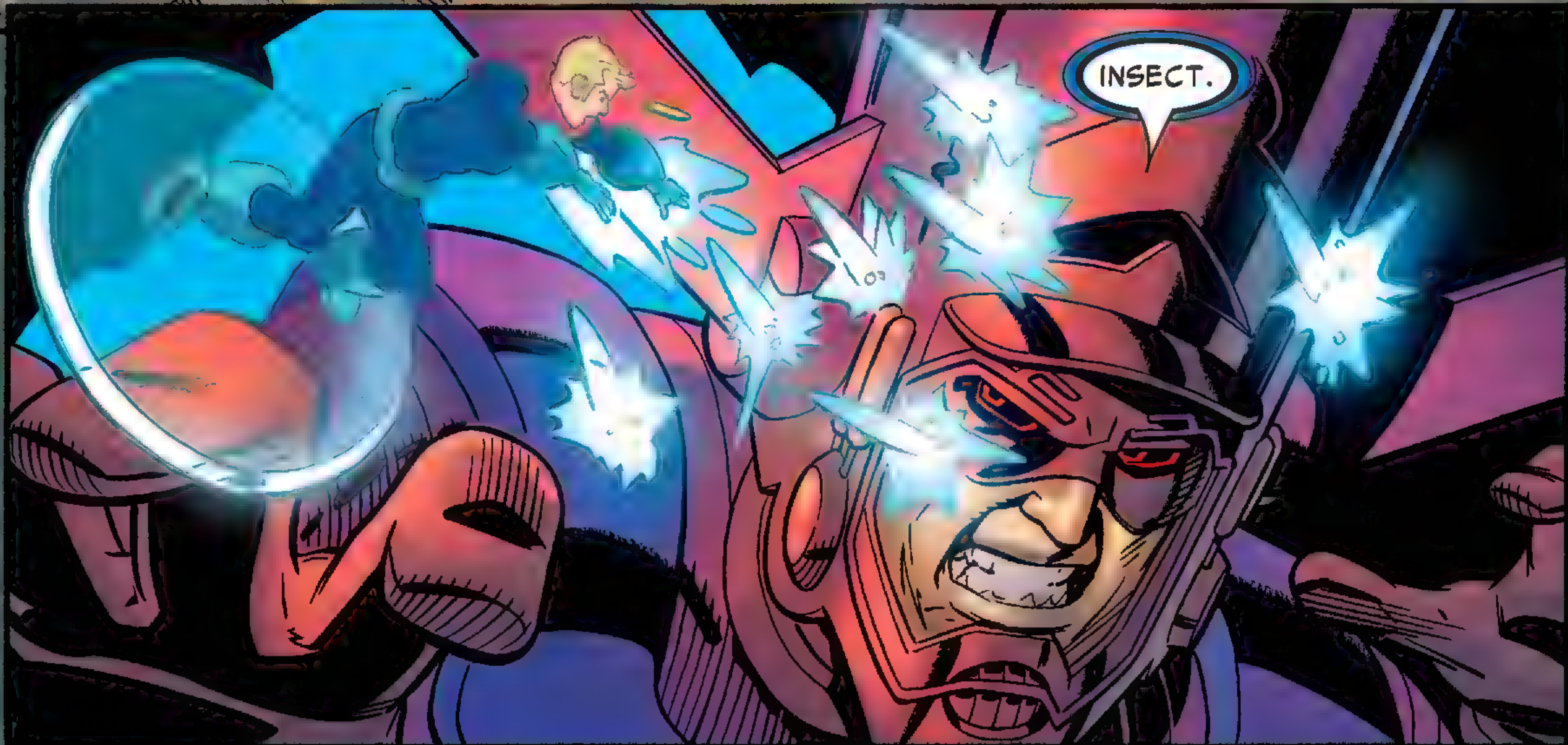
I'M TRYING! THEY'RE HALF-ENERGY!

THEN HIT TH' HALF WHAT C'N BE WHALED ON AN'--

BEN, WHAT'S THAT ROAR?

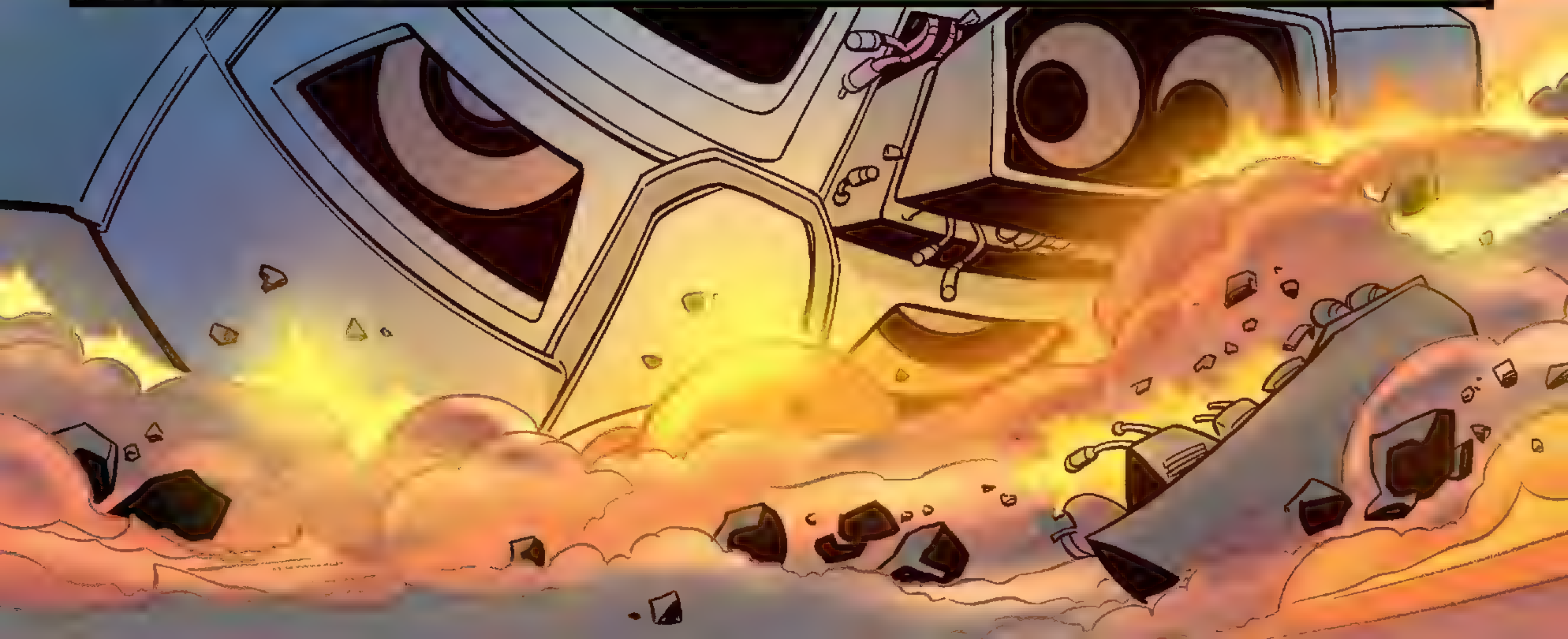
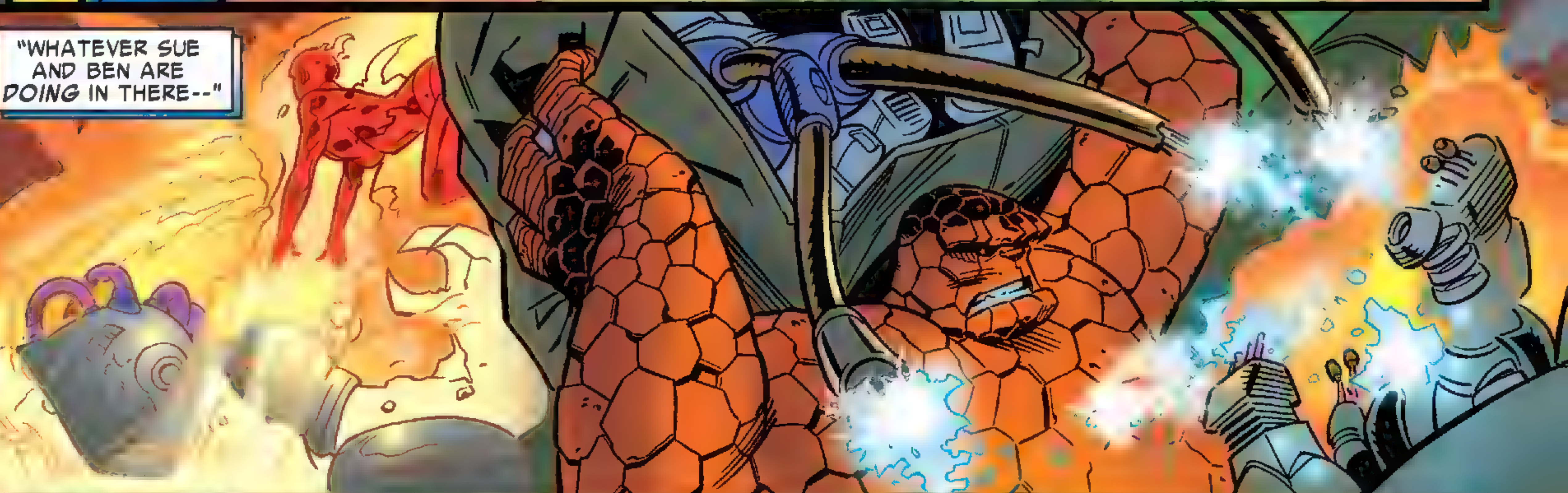


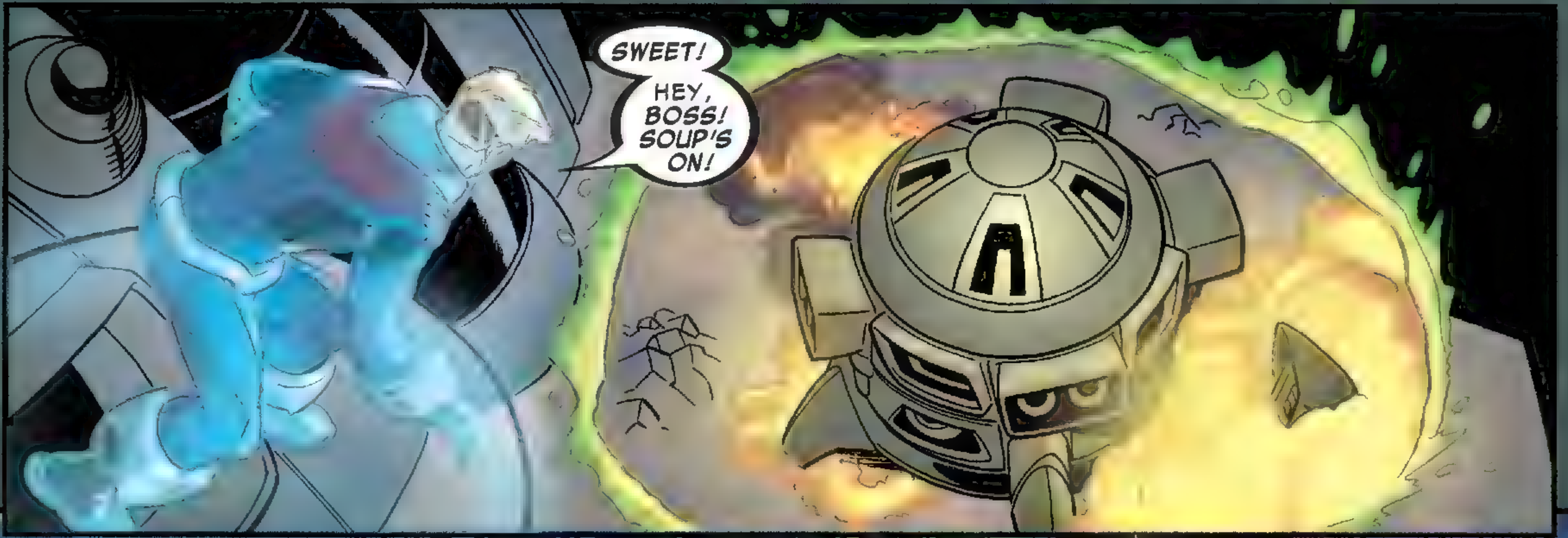




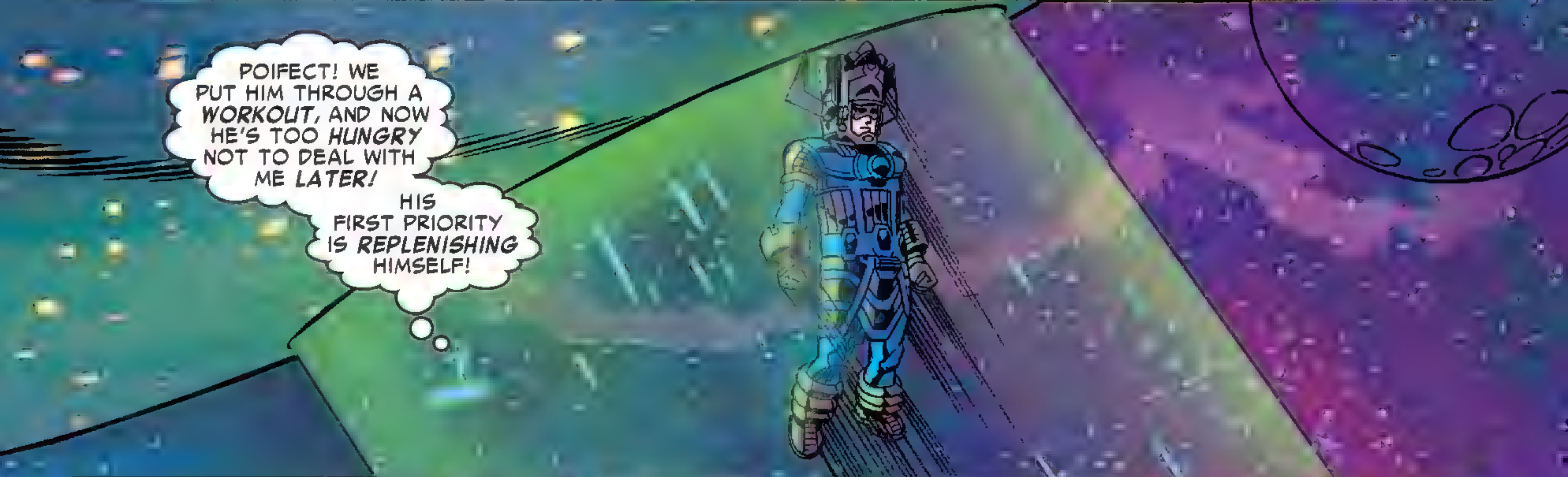


"WHATEVER SUE
AND BEN ARE
DOING IN THERE--"

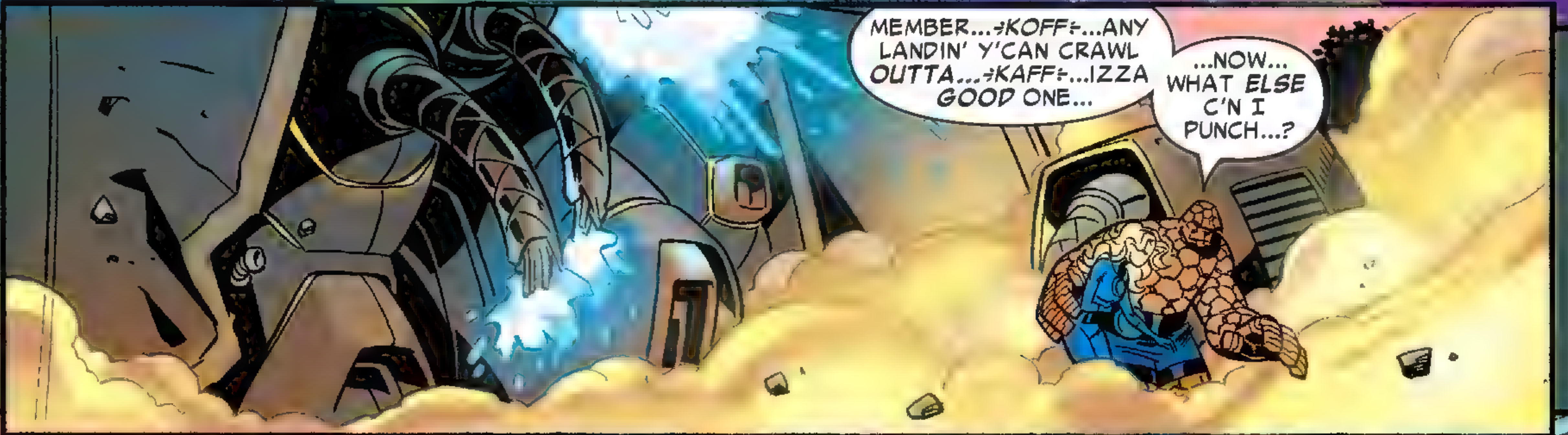




SWEET!
HEY,
BOSS!
SOUP'S
ON!

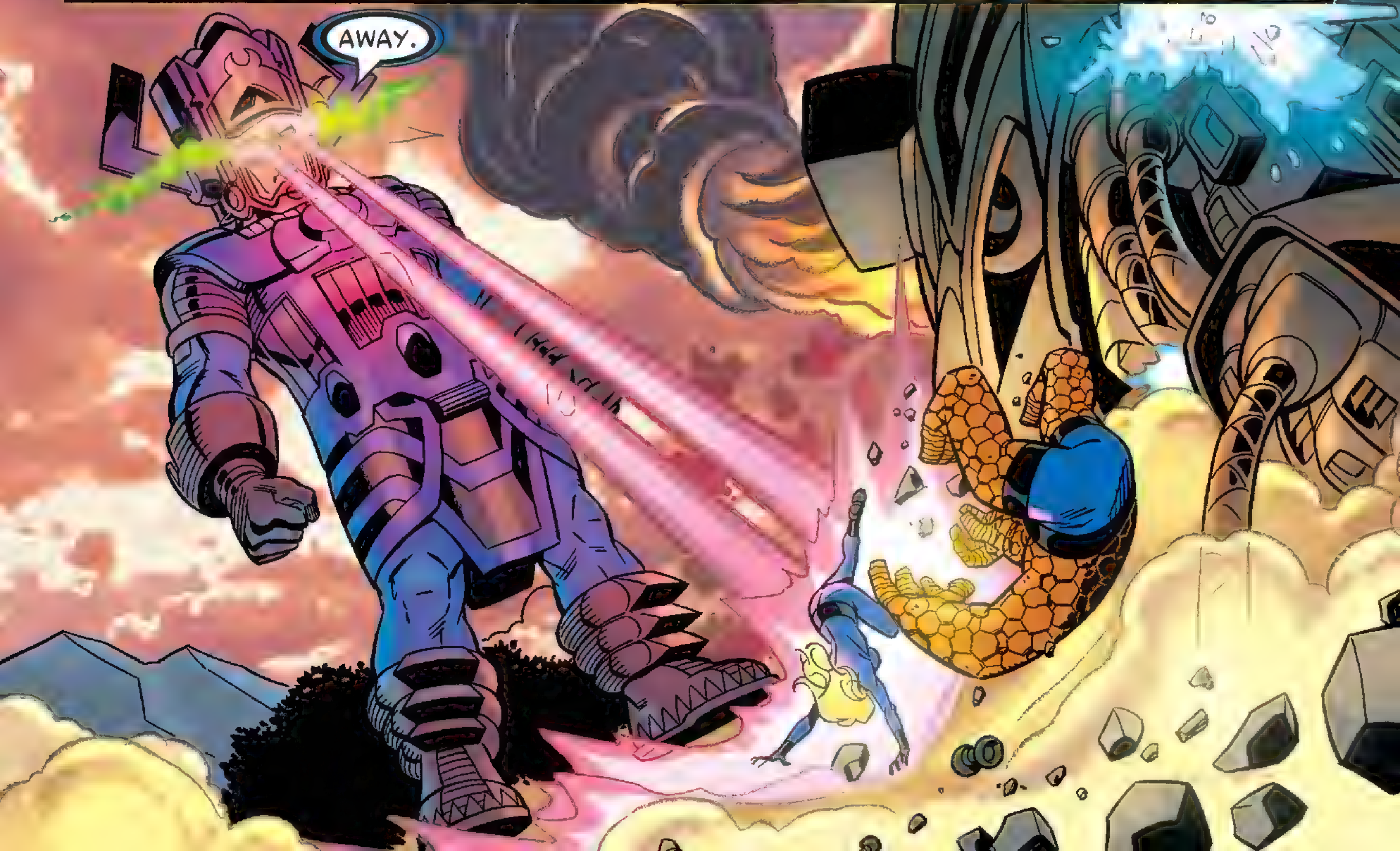


POIFECT! WE
PUT HIM THROUGH A
WORKOUT, AND NOW
HE'S TOO HUNGRY
NOT TO DEAL WITH
ME LATER!
HIS
FIRST PRIORITY
IS REPLENISHING
HIMSELF!



MEMBER...KOFF...ANY
LANDIN' Y'CAN CRAWL
OUTTA...KAFF...IZZA
GOOD ONE...

...NOW...
WHAT ELSE
C'N I
PUNCH...?



AWAY.

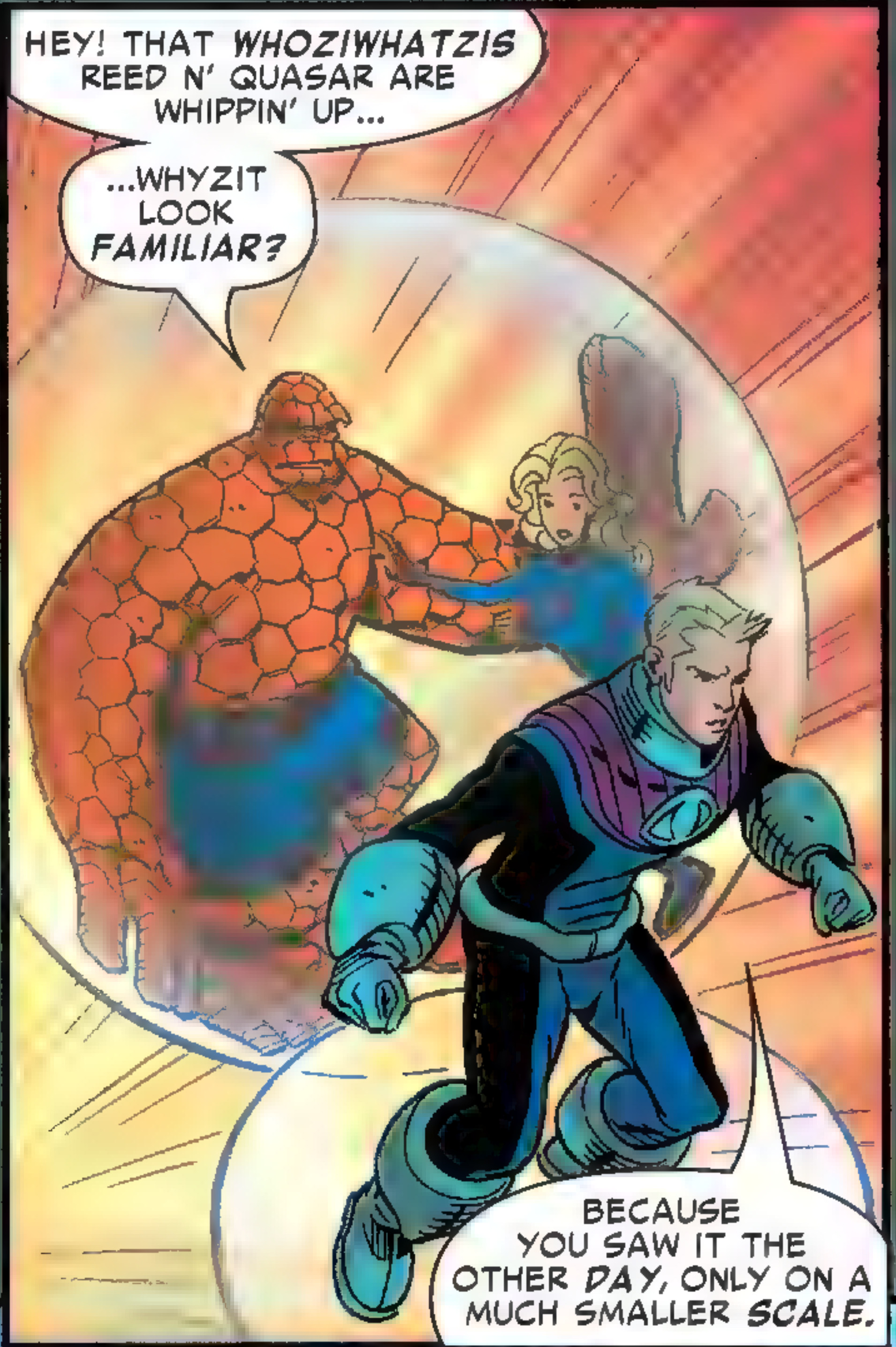
IT'S OKAY! THAT'LL TAKE HIM PRECIOUS TIME TO REPAIR, AND SPLIT SECONDS COUNT!

THIS WAY!

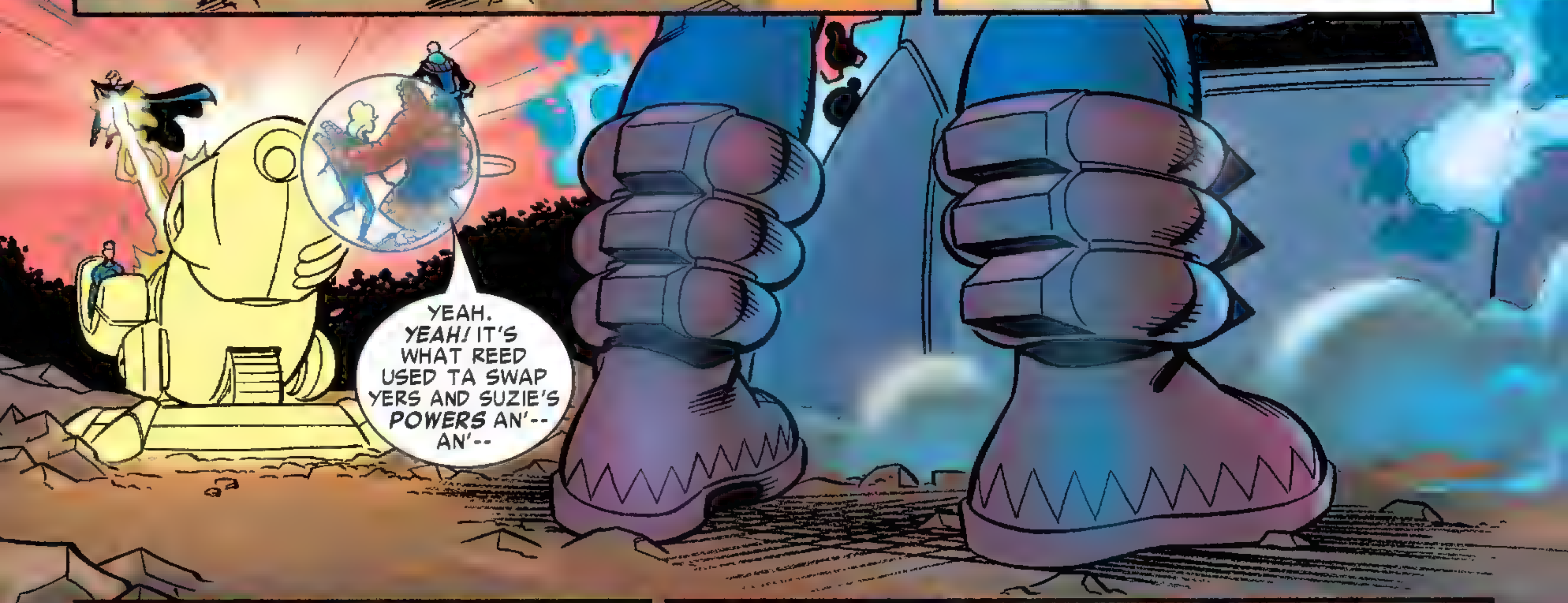


HEY! THAT WHOZIWHATZIS REED N' QUASAR ARE WHIPPIN' UP...

...WHYZIT LOOK FAMILIAR?



BECAUSE YOU SAW IT THE OTHER DAY, ONLY ON A MUCH SMALLER SCALE.

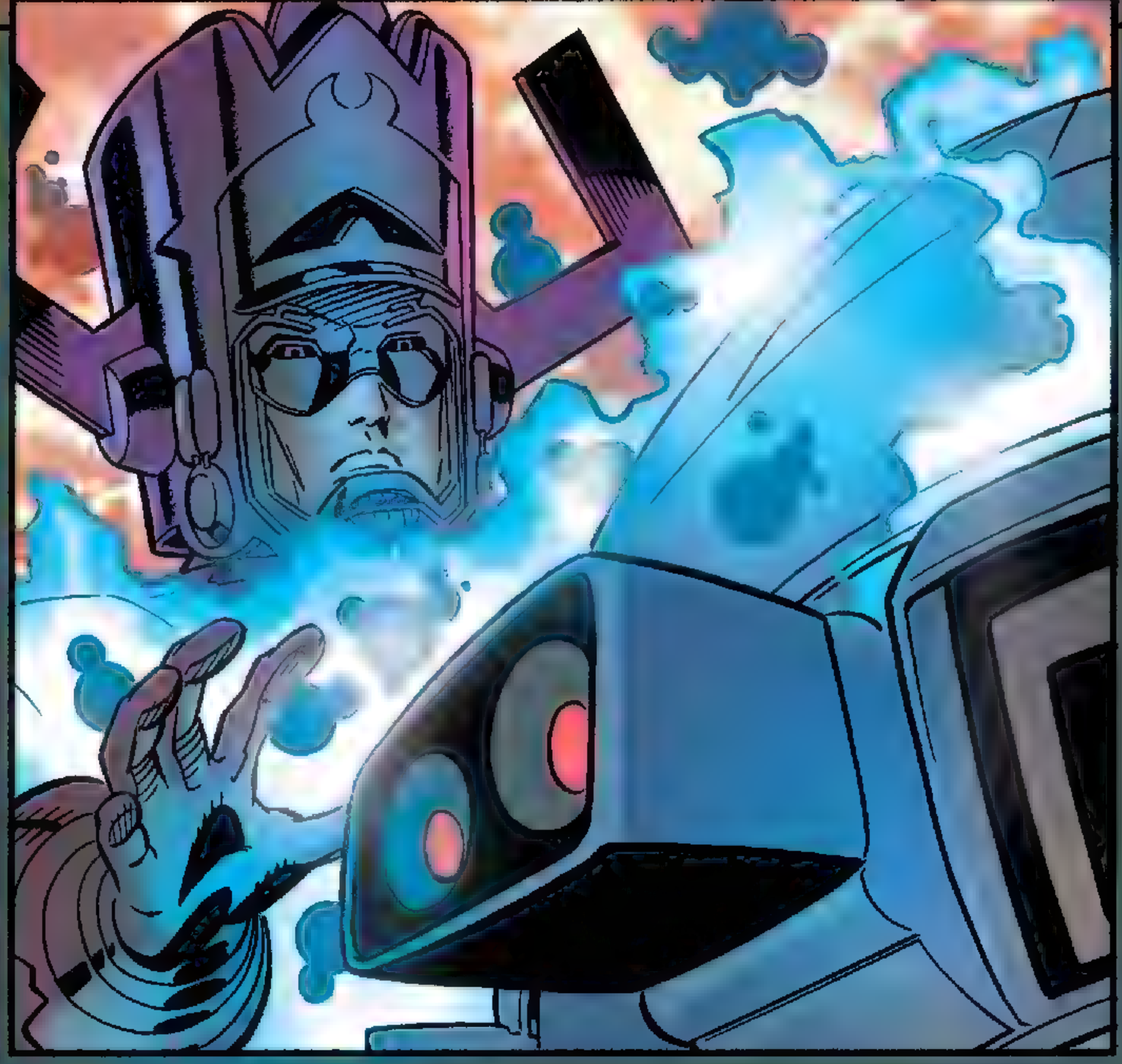


YEAH. YEAH! IT'S WHAT REED USED TA SWAP YERS AND SUZIE'S POWERS AN'-- AN'--

--AN' I DON'T GET IT.

WATCH AND LEARN. QUASAR, YOU DONE?

READY WHEN YOU ARE, JOHNNY!



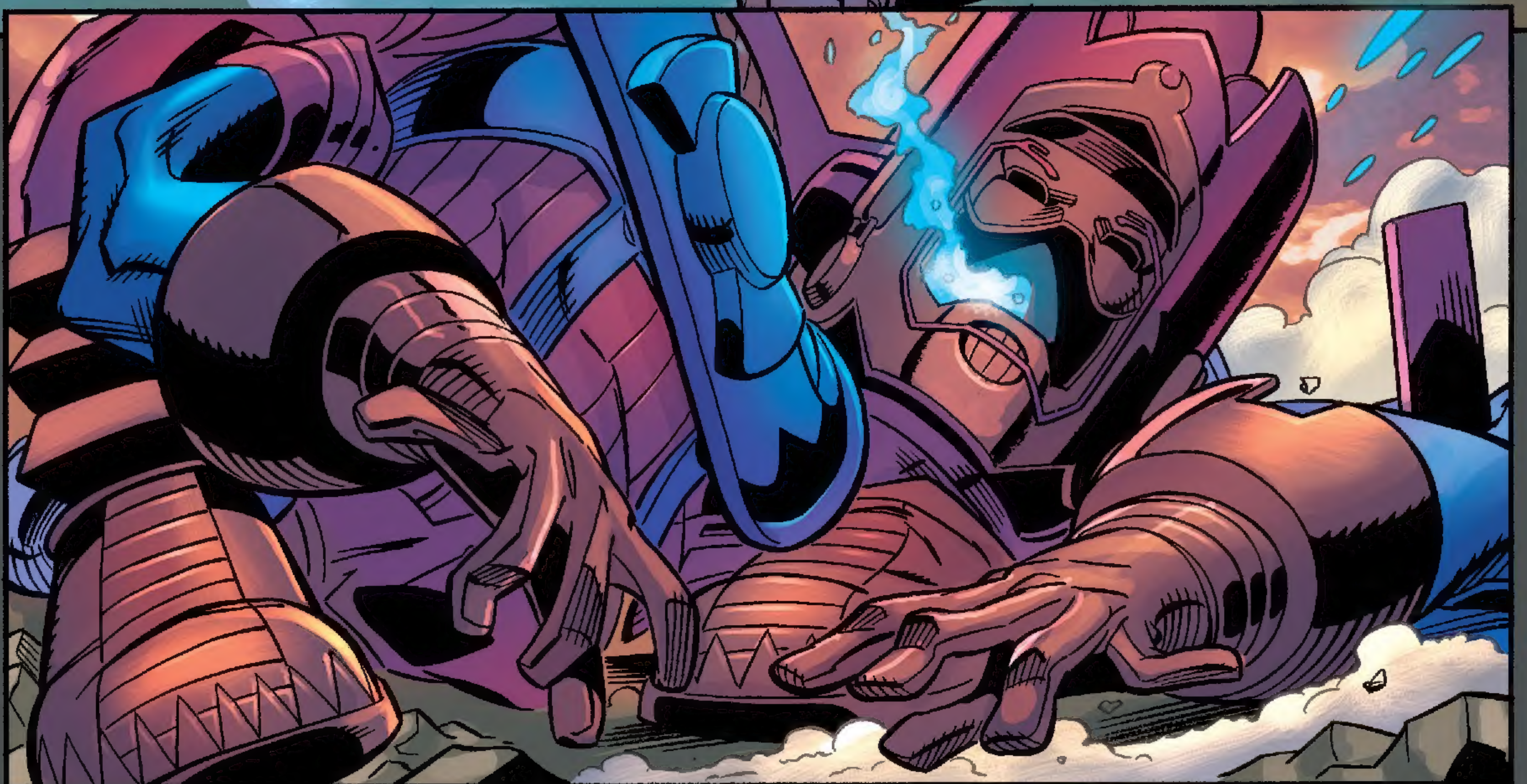




NO!

GALACTUS
YIELDS TO NONE! YOUR
DEVICES ARE OF NO
CONSEQUENCE!

GALACTUS
IS THE ALPHA
AND THE OMEGA!
THE BEGINNING
AND THE--*





REED,
CATCH HIM!
JOHNNY,
WHAT JUST
HAPPENED?

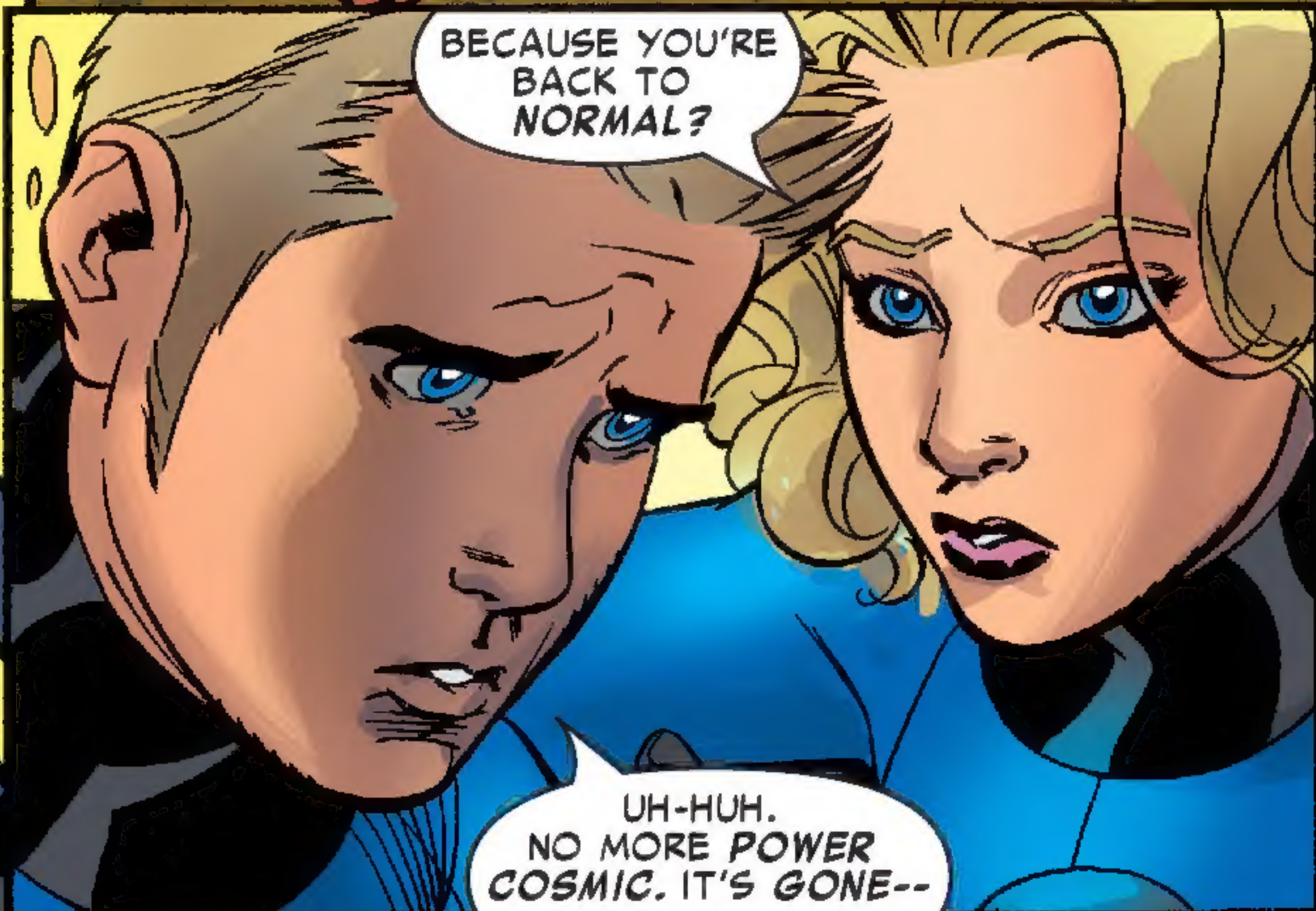


I...I THOUGHT...
BIG FOR A
CHANGE.

I FIGURED...FIGURED
THAT IF REED COULD...
MOVE OUR ENERGIES
AROUND...

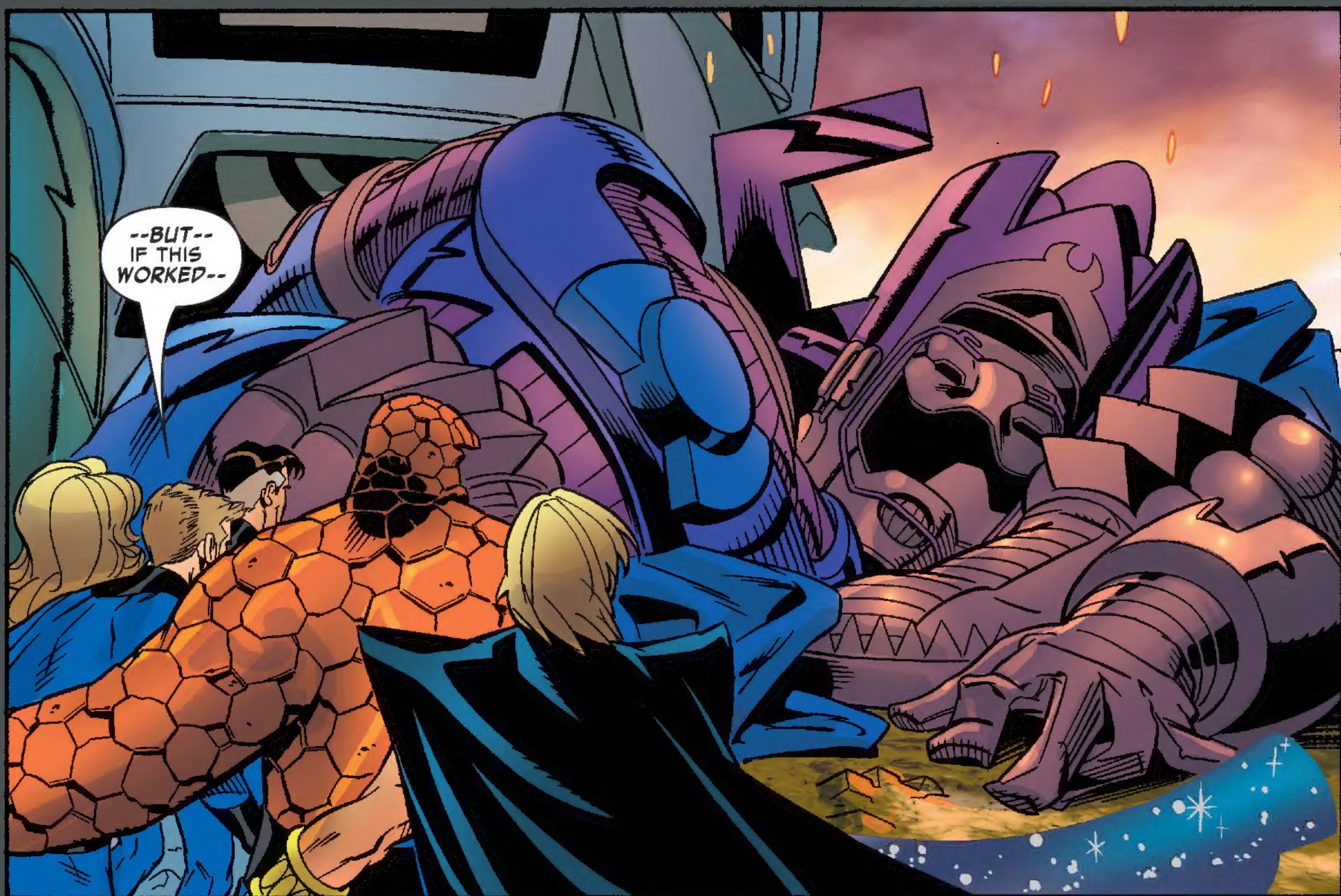
...HE
MAYBE COULD
DO THE SAME TO
GALACTUS IF I GAVE
HIM ENOUGH FUEL. I
CAN EXPLAIN IN A
SEC, BUT...

...BOY...
EVERYTHING
LOOKS
FUNNY...

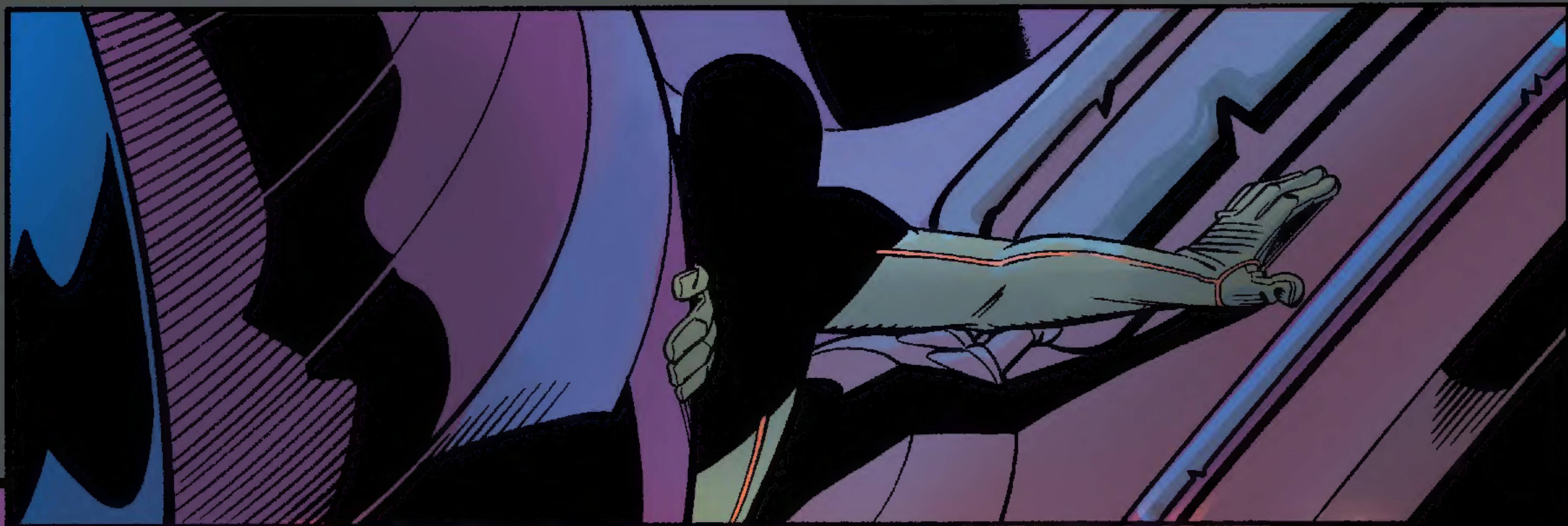


BECAUSE YOU'RE
BACK TO
NORMAL?

UH-HUH.
NO MORE POWER
COSMIC. IT'S GONE--



--BUT--
IF THIS
WORKED--



--SO IS
GALACTUS.

